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BRITISH MORALISTS

SELBY-BIGGE

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London

HENRY FROWDE, M.A.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS WAREHOUSE
AMEN CORNER, E.C.



New York

THE MACMILLAN CO., 66 FIFTH AVENUE

BRITISH MORALISTS

BEING

SELECTIONS FROM WRITERS
PRINCIPALLY OF THE EIGHTEENTH
CENTURY

EDITED

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND ANALYTICAL INDEX

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

Oxford

AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

1897

Albert S. Hamilton

Oxford

PRINTED AT THE CLARENDON PRESS
BY HORACE HART, M.A.
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

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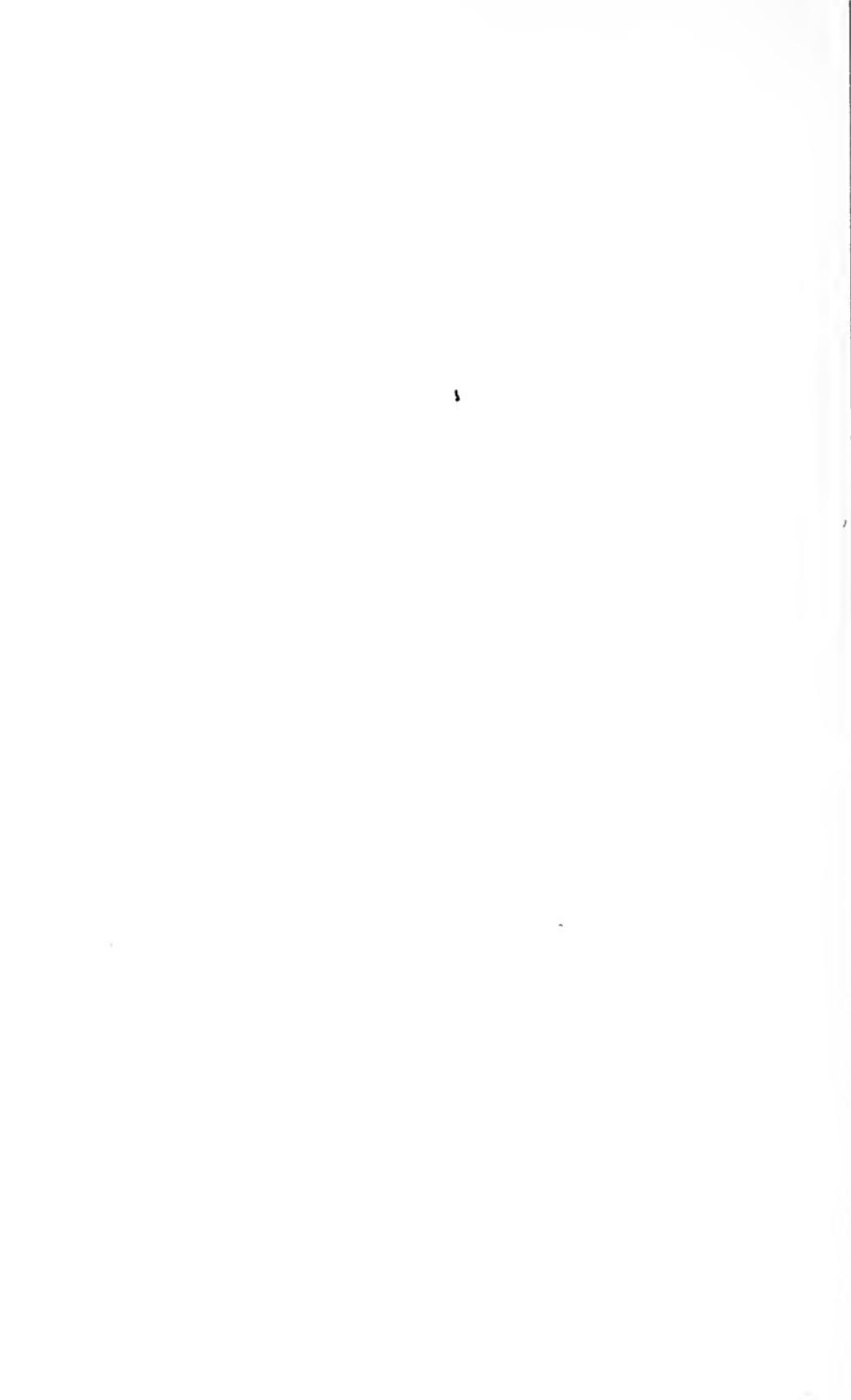
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SAMUEL CLARKE

*DISCOURSE UPON NATURAL
RELIGION*

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B

[‘Discourse,’ preached as Boyle Lectures 1705, first printed 1706, reprinted here from the collected edition of Clarke’s Works, 1738.

The Author’s italics are omitted, and most of the footnotes citing classical authors. The punctuation is partially modernised.]

CLARKE

On Natural Religion

* * * * *

- 482** I. The same necessary and eternal different Relations, that different Things bear one to another, and the same consequent Fitness or Unfitness of the Application of different things or different Relations one to another, with regard to which, the Will of God always and necessarily does determine it self, to choose to act only what is agreeable to Justice, Equity, Goodness and Truth, in order to the Welfare of the whole Universe, ought likewise constantly to determine the Wills of all subordinate rational Beings, to govern all Their Actions by the same Rules, for the Good of the Publick, in their respective Stations. That is, these eternal and necessary differences of things make it fit and reasonable for Creatures so to act; they cause it to be their Duty, or lay an Obligation upon them, so to do, even separate from the consideration of these Rules being the positive Will or Command of God, and also antecedent to any respect or regard, expectation or apprehension, of any particular private and personal Advantage or Disadvantage, Reward or Punishment, either present or future, annexed either by natural consequence, or by positive appointment, to the practising or neglecting of those Rules.

483 The several Parts of this Proposition, may be proved distinctly, in the following manner.

i. That there are Differences of things, and different Relations, Respects or Proportions, of some things towards others, is as evident and undeniable, as that one magnitude or number, is greater, equal to, or smaller than another. That from these different Relations of different things, there necessarily arises an agreement or disagreement of some things with others, or a fitness or unfitness of the application of different things or different relations one to another, is likewise as plain, as that there is any such thing as Proportion or Disproportion in Geometry and Arithmetick, or Uniformity or Difformity in comparing together the respective Figures of Bodies. Further, that there is a Fitness or Suitableness of certain Circumstances to certain Persons, and an Unsuitableness of others, founded in the nature of Things and the Qualifications of Persons, antecedent to all positive appointment whatsoever; Also that from the different relations of different Persons one to another, there necessarily arises a fitness or unfitness of certain manners of Behaviour of some persons towards others, is as manifest, as that the Properties which flow from the Essences of different mathematical Figures, have different congruities or incongruities between themselves, or that, in Mechanicks, certain Weights or Powers have very different Forces, and different Effects one upon Another, according to their different Distances, or different Positions and Situations in respect of each other. For instance: That God is infinitely superior to Men, is as clear, as that Infinity is larger than a Point, or Eternity longer than a Moment. And 'tis as certainly Fit, that Men should honour and worship, obey and imitate God, rather than on the contrary in all their Actions indeavour to dishonour and disobey him, as 'tis certainly True, that they have an entire dependence on Him, and He on the contrary can in no respect receive any advantage from Them: and not only so, but also that his Will is as certainly and unalterably just and equitable in giving his Commands, as his

Power is irresistible in requiring submission to it. Again ; 'Tis a thing absolutely and necessarily Fitter in it self, that the Supreme Author and Creator of the Universe, should govern, order and direct all things to certain and constant regular Ends, than that every thing should be permitted to go on at Adventures, and produce uncertain Effects merely by chance and in the utmost confusion, without any determinate View or Design at all. 'Tis a Thing manifestly Fitter in it self, that the All-powerful Governour of the World, should do always what is Best in the whole, and what tends most to the universal Good of the whole Creation, than that he should make the Whole continually miserable ; or that, to satisfy the unreasonable Desires of any particular depraved Natures, he should at any time suffer the Order of the Whole to be altered and perverted. Lastly, 'tis a thing evidently and infinitely more Fit, that any one particular innocent and good Being, should by the Supreme Ruler and Disposer of all things, be placed and preserved in an easy and happy Estate, than that, without any fault or demerit of its own, it should be made extremely, remedilessly, and endlessly miserable. In like manner, in Men's dealing and conversing one with another, 'tis undeniably more Fit, absolutely and in the Nature of the thing itself, that all Men should endeavour to promote the universal good and welfare of All, than that all Men should be continually contriving the ruin and destruction of All. 'Tis evidently more Fit, even before all positive Bargains and Compacts, that Men should deal one with another according to the known Rules of Justice and Equity, than that every Man for his own present Advantage, should without scruple disappoint the most reasonable and equitable Expectations of his Neighbours, and cheat and defraud, or spoil by violence, all others without restraint. Lastly, 'tis without dispute more Fit and reasonable in itself, that I should preserve the Life of an innocent Man, that happens at any time to be in my Power, or deliver him from any imminent danger, tho' I have never made any promise so to do,

than that I should suffer him to perish, or take away his Life, without any reason or provocation at all.

484 These things are so notoriously plain and self-evident, that nothing but the extrekest stupidity of Mind, corruption of Manners, or perverseness of Spirit can possibly make any Man entertain the least doubt concerning them. For a Man endued with Reason, to deny the Truth of these Things, is the very same thing, as if a Man that has the use of his Sight, should at the same time that he beholds the Sun, deny that there is any such thing as Light in the World ; or as if a Man that understands Geometry or Arithmetick, should deny the most obvious and known Proportions of Lines or Numbers, and perversely contend that the Whole is not equal to all its parts, or that a Square is not double to a triangle of equal base and height. Any Man of ordinary capacity, and unbyassed judgment, plainness and simplicity, who had never read, and had never been told, that there were Men and Philosophers, who had in earnest asserted and attempted to prove, that there is no natural and unalterable difference between Good and Evil, would at the first hearing be as hardly perswaded to believe, that it could ever really enter into the Heart of any Intelligent Man, to deny all natural difference between Right and Wrong, as he would be to believe, that ever there could be any Geometer who would seriously and in good earnest lay it down as a first Principle, that a crooked Line is as straight as a right one. So that indeed it might justly seem altogether a needless undertaking, to attempt to prove and establish the eternal difference of Good and Evil, had there not appeared certain Men, as Mr. Hobbes and some few others, who have presumed, contrary to the plainest and most obvious reason of Mankind, to assert, and not without some Subtilty indeavoured to prove, that there is no such real Difference originally, necessarily, and absolutely in the Nature of Things, but that all Obligation of Duty to God, arises merely from his absolute irrisistible Power, and all Duty towards Men, merely from positive

Compact: And have founded their whole Scheme of Politicks
485 upon that Opinion. Wherein as they have contradicted the judgment of all the Wisest and soberest part of Mankind, so they have not been able to avoid contradicting themselves also. For, (not to mention now, that they have no way to show how Compacts themselves come to be obligatory, but by inconsistently owning an eternal original Fitness in the thing itself, which I shall have occasion to observe hereafter: Besides This, I say,) if there be naturally and absolutely in things themselves, no difference between Good and Evil, Just and Unjust, then in the State of Nature, before any Compact be made, 'tis equally as good, just and reasonable, for one Man to destroy the Life of another, not only when 'tis necessary for his own Preservation, but also arbitrarily and without any provocation at all, or any appearance of advantage to himself, as to preserve or save another Man's Life, when he may do it without any hazard of his own. The consequence of which, is; that not only the first and most obvious way for every particular Man to secure himself effectually, would be (as Mr. Hobbes teaches) to endeavour to prevent and cut off all others, but also that Men might destroy one another upon every foolish and peevish or arbitrary Humour, even when they did not think any such thing necessary for their own preservation. And the Effect of this practice must needs be, that it would terminate in the destruction of all Mankind. Which being undeniably a great and unsufferable Evil, Mr. Hobbes himself confesses it reasonable, that, to prevent this Evil, Men should enter into certain Compacts to preserve one another. Now if the destruction of Mankind by each other's Hands, be such an Evil, that, to prevent it, it was fit and reasonable that Men should enter into Compacts to preserve each other, then, before any such Compacts, it was manifestly a thing unfit and unreasonable in itself, that Mankind should all destroy one another. And if so, then for the same reason it was also unfit and unreasonable, antecedent to all Compacts, that any one Man should

destroy another arbitrarily and without any provocation, or at any time when it was not absolutely and immediately necessary for the preservation of himself. Which is directly contradictory to Mr. Hobbes's first Supposition, of¹ there being no natural and absolute difference between Good and Evil, Just and Unjust,
486 antecedent to positive Compact. And in like manner All others, who upon any pretence whatsoever, teach that Good and Evil depend originally on the Constitution of positive Laws, whether Divine or Humane, must unavoidably run into the same Absurdity. For if there be no such thing as Good and Evil in the Nature of Things, antecedent to all Laws, then neither can any one Law be better than another, nor any one thing whatever, be more justly established, and inforced by Laws, then the contrary ; nor can² any reason be given, why any Laws should ever be made at all : But all Laws equally, will be either arbitrary and tyrannical, or frivolous and needless, because the contrary might with equal Reason have been established, if before the making of the Laws, all things had been alike indifferent in their own Nature. There is no possible way to avoid this Absurdity, but by saying, that out of things in their own Nature absolutely indifferent, those are chosen by wise Governours to be made obligatory by Law, the practice of which they judge will tend to the publick benefit of the Community. But this is an express Contradiction in the very Terms. For if the practice of certain things tends to the publick benefit of the World, and the contrary would tend to the publick disadvantage, then those things are not in their own nature indifferent, but were good and reasonable to be practised before any Law was made, and can only for that very reason be wisely inforced by the Authority of Laws. Only here it is to be observed, that by the publick

¹ Ex his sequitur injuriam nemini fieri posse, nisi ei quocum initur pactum.
De Cive, c. 3. § 4, where see more to the same purpose.

² Manifestum est rationem nullam esse Lege prohibendi noxas tales, nisi agnoscant tales Actus, etiam antecedenter ad ullam Legem, mala esse. Cumberl. *de Leg. Nat.* p. 194.

Benefit must not be understood the interest of any one particular Nation, to the plain injury or prejudice of the rest of Mankind, any more than the interest of one City or Family, in opposition to their Neighbours of the same Country : But those things only are truly good in their own Nature, which either tend to the universal benefit and welfare of all Men, or
487 at least are not destructive of it. The true State therefore of this Case, is plainly this. Some things are in their own nature Good and Reasonable and Fit to be done, such as keeping Faith, and performing equitable Compacts, and the like ; And these receive not their obligatory power, from any Law or Authority, but are only declared, confirmed and inforced by penalties, upon such as would not perhaps be governed by right Reason only. Other things are in their own nature absolutely Evil, such as breaking Faith, refusing to perform equitable Compacts, cruelly destroying those who have neither directly nor indirectly given any occasion for any such treatment, and the like ; And these cannot by any Law or Authority whatsoever, be made fit and reasonable, or excusable to be practised. Lastly, other things are in their own Nature Indifferent ; that is, (not absolutely and strictly so ; as such trivial Actions, which have no way any tendency at all either to the publick welfare or damage ; For concerning such things, it would be childish and trifling to suppose any Laws to be made at all ; But they are) such things, whose tendency to the publick benefit or disadvantage, is either so small or so remote, or so obscure and involved, that the generality of People are not able of themselves to discern on which side they ought to act : And these things are made obligatory by the Authority of Laws ; Though perhaps every one cannot distinctly perceive the reason and fitness of their being enjoined : Of which sort are many particular penal Laws, in several Countries and Nations. But to proceed.

488 The principal thing that can, with any colour of Reason, seem to countenance the Opinion of those who deny the natural

and eternal difference of Good and Evil, (for Mr. Hobbes's false Reasonings, I shall hereafter consider by themselves;) is the difficulty there may sometimes be, to define exactly the bounds of right and wrong, the variety of Opinions, that have obtained even among understanding and learned Men concerning certain Questions of just and unjust, especially in political Matters, and the many contrary Laws that have been made in divers Ages and in different Countries, concerning these Matters. But as, in Painting, two very different Colours, by diluting each other very slowly and gradually, may from the highest intension in either extreme, terminate in the midst insensibly, and so run one into the other, that it shall not be possible even for a skilful Eye to determine exactly where the one ends, and the other begins, and yet the Colours may really differ as much as can be, not in degree only but entirely in kind, as red and blue, or white and black: So, though it may perhaps be very difficult in some nice and perplexed Cases (which yet are very far from occurring frequently), to define exactly the bounds of Right and Wrong, Just and Unjust, and there may be some latitude in the judgment of different Men, and the Laws of divers Nations, yet Right and Wrong are nevertheless in themselves totally and essentially different, even altogether as much, as White and Black, Light and Darkness. The Spartan Law perhaps, which permitted their Youth to Steal, may, as absurd as it was, bear much dispute whether it was absolutely Unjust or no, because every Man having an absolute Right in his own Goods, it may seem that the Members of any Society may agree to transfer or alter their own Properties upon what Conditions they shall think fit. But if it could be supposed that a Law had been made at Sparta, or at Rome, or in India, or in any other part of the World, whereby it had been commanded or allowed, that every Man might Rob by Violence, and Murther whomsoever he met with, or that no Faith should be kept with any Man, nor any equitable Compacts performed, no

Man, with any tolerable use of his Reason, whatever diversity of Judgment might be among them in other matters, would have thought that such a Law could have authorised or excused, much less have justified such Actions, and have made them become good: Because 'tis plainly not in men's Power to make Falsehood be Truth, though they may alter the Property of their Goods as they please. Now if in flagrant Cases, the natural and essential difference between Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, cannot but be confessed to be plainly and undeniably evident, the difference between them must be also essential and unalterable in all even the smallest and nicest and most intricate Cases, though it be not so easy to be discerned and accurately distinguished. For if from the difficulty of determining exactly the bounds of Right and Wrong in many perplext Cases, it could truly be concluded that Just and Unjust were not essentially different by Nature, but only by positive Constitution and Custom, it would follow equally, that they were not really, essentially, and unalterably different even in the most flagrant Cases that can be supposed. Which is an assertion so very absurd, that Mr. Hobbes himself could hardly vent it without blushing, and discovering plainly, by his shifting Expressions, his secret Self-condemnation. There Are therefore certain necessary and eternal differences of things, and certain consequent fitnesses or unfitnesses of the application of different Things or different Relations one to another, not depending on any positive Constitutions, but founded unchangeably in the nature and reason of things, and unavoidably arising from the differences of the things themselves. Which is the first Branch of the general Proposition I proposed to prove.

489 2. Now what these eternal and unalterable Relations, Respects, or Proportions of things, with their consequent Agreements or Disagreements, Fitnesses or Unfitnesses, absolutely and necessarily Are in themselves, that also they appear to be, to the Understandings of all Intelligent Beings, except those only,

who understand things to be what they are not, that is, whose Understandings are either very imperfect, or very much depraved. And by this Understanding or Knowledge of the natural and necessary relations, fitnesses, and proportions of things, the Wills likewise of all Intelligent Beings are constantly directed, and must needs be determined to act accordingly, excepting those only, who Will things to be what they are not and cannot be ; that is, whose Wills are corrupted by particular Interest or Affection, or swayed by some unreasonable and prevailing Passion. Wherefore since the natural Attributes of God, his infinite Knowledge, Wisdom and Power, set Him infinitely above all possibility of being deceived by any Error, or of being influenced by any wrong affection, 'tis manifest His Divine Will cannot but always and necessarily determine itself to choose to Do what in the whole is absolutely Best and Fittest to be done ; that is, to act constantly according to the eternal Rules of infinite Goodness, Justice, and Truth. As I have endeavoured to show distinctly in my former Discourse, in deducing severally the Moral Attributes of God.

490 3. And now, that the same Reason of Things, with regard to which the Will of God always and necessarily Does determine itself to act in constant conformity to the eternal Rules of Justice, Equity, Goodness, and Truth, ought also constantly to determine the Wills of all Subordinate Rational Beings, to govern all Their Actions by the same Rules, is very evident. For, as 'tis absolutely impossible in Nature, that God should be deceived by any Error, or influenced by any wrong Affection : So 'tis very unreasonable and blame-worthy in Practice, that any Intelligent Creatures, whom God has made so far like unto himself, as to endue them with those excellent Faculties of Reason and Will, whereby they are enabled to distinguish Good from Evil, and to chuse the one and refuse the other, should either negligently suffer themselves to be imposed upon and deceived in Matters of Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, or wilfully and perversely

allow themselves to be over-ruled by absurd Passions, and corrupt or partial Affections, to act contrary to what they know is Fit to be done. Which two Things, viz. negligent Misunderstanding and wilful Passions or Lusts, are, as I said, the only Causes which can make a reasonable Creature act contrary to Reason, that is, contrary to the eternal Rules of Justice, Equity, Righteousness and Truth. For, was it not for these inexcusable corruptions and depravations, 'tis impossible but the same Proportions and Fitnesses of things, which have so much Weight and so much Excellency and Beauty in them, that the All-powerful Creator and Governour of the Universe, (who has the absolute and uncontroulable Dominion of all things in his own Hands, and is accountable to none for what he does, yet) thinks it no diminution of his Power to make this Reason of Things the unalterable Rule and Law of his own Actions in the Government of the World, and does nothing by mere Will and Arbitrariness ; 'tis impossible (I say,) if it was not for inexcusable corruption and depravation, but the same eternal Reason of Things must much more have Weight enough to determine constantly the Wills and Actions of all Subordinate, Finite, Dependent and Accountable Beings. For originally and in reality, 'tis as natural and (morally speaking) necessary, that the Will should be determined in every Action by the Reason of the thing, and the Right of the Case, as 'tis natural and (absolutely speaking) necessary, that the Understanding should submit to a demonstrated Truth. And 'tis as absurd and blame-worthy, to mistake negligently plain Right and Wrong, that is, to understand the Proportions of things in Morality to be what they are not, or wilfully to act contrary to known Justice and Equity, that is, to will things to be what they are not and cannot be, as it would be absurd and ridiculous for a Man in Arithmetical Matters, ignorantly to believe that Twice Two is not equal to Four, or wilfully and obstinately to contend, against his own clear Knowledge, that the whole

491 is not equal to all its Parts. The only difference is, that Assent to a plain speculative Truth, is not in a Man's Power to withhold, but to Act according to the plain Right and Reason of things, this he may, by the natural Liberty of his Will, forbear. But the One he ought to do, and 'tis as much his plain and indispensable Duty, as the other he cannot but do, and 'tis the Necessity of his Nature to do it. He that wilfully refuses to Honour and obey God, from whom he received his Being, and to whom he continually owes his Preservation, is really guilty of an equal absurdity and inconsistency in Practice, as he that in Speculation denies the Effect to owe any thing to its Cause, or the Whole to be bigger than its Parts. He that refuses to deal with all Men equitably, and with every Man as he desires they should deal with him, is guilty of the very same unreasonableness and contradiction in one Case, as he that in another Case should affirm one Number or Quantity to be equal to another, and yet That other at the same time not to be equal to the first. Lastly, he that acknowledges himself obliged to the practice of certain Duties both towards God and towards Men, and yet takes no care either to preserve his own Being, or at least not to preserve himself in such a state and temper of Mind and Body, as may best inable him to perform those Duties, is altogether as inexcusable and ridiculous, as he that in another matter should affirm one thing at the same time that he denies another, without which the former could not possibly be true; or undertake one thing, at the same time that he obstinately omits another, without which the former is by no means practicable. Wherefore all rational Creatures, whose Wills are not constantly and regularly determined, and their Actions governed, by right Reason and the necessary differences of Good and Evil, according to the eternal and invariable Rules of Justice, Equity, Goodness and Truth, but suffer themselves to be swayed by unaccountable arbitrary Humours, and rash Passions, by Lusts, Vanity and Pride,

by private Interest, or present sensual Pleasures ; These, setting up their own unreasonable Self-will in opposition to the Nature and Reason of Things, endeavour (as much as in them lies) to make things be what they are not, and cannot be. Which is the highest Presumption and greatest Insolence, as well as the greatest Absurdity, imaginable. 'Tis acting contrary to that Understanding, Reason and Judgment, which God has implanted in their Natures on purpose to enable them to discern the difference between good and evil. 'Tis attempting to destroy that Order, by which the Universe subsists. 'Tis offering the highest affront imaginable to the Creator of all things, who made things to be what they are, and governs every thing himself according to the Laws of their several Natures. In a word ; All wilful wickedness and perversion of Right, is the very same Insolence and Absurdity in Moral Matters, as it would be in Natural Things, for a man to pretend to alter the certain Proportions of Numbers, to take away the Demonstrable Relations and Properties of Mathematical Figures, to make Light Darkness, and Darkness Light, or to call Sweet Bitter, and Bitter Sweet.

492 Further : As it appears thus from the abstract and absolute Reason and nature of things, that all rational Creatures Ought, that is, are obliged to take care that their Wills and Actions be constantly determined and governed by the eternal rule of Right and Equity : So the certainty and universality of that Obligation is plainly confirmed, and the force of it particularly discovered and applied to every Man, by This ; that in like manner as no one, who is instructed in Mathematicks, can forbear giving his Assent to every Geometrical Demonstration, of which he understands the Terms, either by his own Study, or by having had them explained to him by others ; so no man, who either has patience and opportunities to examine and consider things himself, or has the means of being taught and instructed in any tolerable manner by Others, concerning the necessary relations and dependencies of things, can avoid

giving his Assent to the fitness and reasonableness of his governing all his Actions by the Law or Rule before mentioned, even though his Practice, through the prevalence of Brutish Lusts, be most absurdly contradictory to that Assent. That is to say: By the Reason of his mind, he cannot but be compelled to own and acknowledge, that there is really such an Obligation indispensably incumbent upon him, even at the same time that in the Actions of his Life he is indeavouring to throw it off and despise it. For the Judgment and Conscience of a Man's own Mind, concerning the Reasonableness and Fitness of the thing, that his Actions should be conformed to such or such a Rule or Law, is the truest and formallest Obligation, even more properly and strictly so, than any opinion whatsoever of the Authority of the Giver of a Law, or any Regard he may have to its Sanction by Rewards and Punishments. For whoever acts contrary to this sense and conscience of his own mind, is necessarily self-condemned; And the greatest and strongest of all Obligations is that, which a Man cannot break through without condemning himself. The dread of superiour Power and Authority, and the Sanction of Rewards and Punishments, however indeed absolutely necessary to the Government of frail and fallible Creatures, and truly the most effectual means of keeping Them in their Duty, is yet really in itself, only a secondary and additional Obligation, or Inforcement of the first. The original Obligation of all, (the ambiguous use of which Word as a Term of Art, has caused some perplexity and confusion in this matter,) is the eternal Reason of Things; That Reason, which God himself who has no Superiour to direct him, and to whose Happiness nothing can be added nor any thing diminished from it, yet constantly obliges himself to govern the World by: And the more excellent and perfect (or the freer from Corruption and Depravation) any Creatures are, the more cheerfully and steddily are their Wills always determined by this Supreme Obligation,

in conformity to the Nature, and in imitation of the most perfect Will of God. So far therefore as Men are conscious of what is right and wrong, so far they Are under an Obligation to act accordingly; and consequently That eternal Rule of Right, which I have been hereto describing, 'tis evident Ought as indispensably to govern men's Actions, as Cannot but necessarily determine their Assent.

493 Now that the Case is truly thus; that the eternal differences of Good and Evil, the unalterable Rule of Right and Equity, do necessarily and unavoidably determine the Judgement, and force the Assent of all Men that use any consideration, is undeniably manifest from the universal Experience of Mankind. For no Man willingly and deliberately transgresses this Rule, in any great and considerable Instance, but he acts contrary to the Judgement and Reason of his own Mind, and secretly reproaches himself for so doing. And no Man observes and obeys it steddily, especially in Cases of difficulty and Temptation, when it interferes with any present Interest, Pleasure or Passion, but his own Mind commends and applauds him for his Resolution, in executing what his Conscience could not forbear giving its assent to, as just and right. And this is what St. Paul means, when he says, (Rom. ii. 14, 15.) that when the Gentiles which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law, these having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves; which shew the work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conscience also bearing witness, and their Thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another.

494 It was a very wise Observation of Plato, which he received from Socrates; that if you take a young Man, impartial and unprejudiced, one that never had any Learning, nor any Experience in the World, and examine him about the natural relations and proportions of things, [or the moral differences of Good and Evil ;] you may only by asking him Questions without teaching him any thing at all directly, cause him to

express in his Answers just and adæquate Notions of Geometrical Truths, [and true and exact determinations concerning Matters of Right and Wrong.] From whence he thought it was to be concluded, that all Knowledge and Learning is nothing but Memory, or only a recollecting upon every new occasion, what had been before known in a state of præ-existence. And some Others both Antients and Moderns, have concluded that the Ideas of all first and simple Truths, either natural or moral, are Innate and originally impressed or stamp'd upon the Mind. In their inference from the Observation, the Authors of Both these Opinions seem to be mistaken. But thus much it proves unavoidably; That the differences, re'lations, and proportions of things both natural and moral, in which all unprejudiced Minds thus naturally agree, are certain, unalterable, and real in the things themselves, and do not at all depend on the variable Opinions, Fancies, or Imaginations of Men prejudiced by Education, Laws, Customs, or evil Practices: And also that the Mind of Man naturally and unavoidably gives its Assent, as to natural and geometrical Truth, so also to the moral differences of things, and to the fitness and reasonableness of the Obligation of the everlasting Law of Righteousness, whenever fairly and plainly proposed.

- 495 Some Men indeed, who, by means of a very evil and vicious Education, or through a long Habit of Wickedness and Debauchery, have extremely corrupted the Principles of their Nature, and have long accustomed themselves to bear down their own Reason, by the force of Prejudice, Lust, and Passion, that they may not be forced to confess themselves self-condemned, will confidently and absolutely contend that they do not really see any natural and necessary difference between what we call Right and Wrong, Just and Unjust; that the Reason and Judgment of their own Mind, does not tell them they are under any such indispensable Obligations, as we would endeavour to perswade them, and that they are not sensible they ought to be governed by any other Rule,

than their own Will and Pleasure. But even these Men, the most abandoned of all Mankind, however industriously they endeavour to conceal and deny their self-condemnation, yet they cannot avoid making a discovery of it sometimes when they are not aware of it. For Example : There is no Man so vile and desperate, who commits at any time a Murder and Robbery, with the most unrelenting Mind, but would choose, if such a thing could be proposed to him, to obtain all the same profit or advantage, whatsoever it be that he aims at, without committing the Crime, rather than with it, even though he was sure to go unpunished for committing the Crime. Nay, I believe, there is no Man, even in Mr. Hobbes's State of Nature, and of Mr. Hobbes's own Principles, but if he was equally assured of securing his main end, his Self-preservation, by either way, would choose to preserve himself rather without destroying all his Fellow-Creatures, than with it, even supposing all Impunity, and all other future conveniences of Life, equal in either Case. Mr. Hobbes's own Scheme, of Men's agreeing by Compact to preserve one another, can hardly be Supposed without this. And this plainly evinces, that the Mind of Man unavoidably acknowledges a natural and necessary difference between Good and Evil, antecedent to all arbitrary and positive Constitution whatsoéver.

496 But the Truth of this, that the Mind of Man naturally and necessarily Assents to the eternal Law of Righteousness, may still better and more clearly and more universally appear, from the Judgment that Men pass upon each Other's Actions, than from what we can discern concerning their Consciousness of their Own. For Men may dissemble and conceal from the World, the judgment of their own Conscience ; nay, by a strange partiality, they may even impose upon and deceive Themselves ; (For who is there, that does not sometimes allow himself, nay, and even justify himself in that, wherein he condemns Another?) But Men's Judgments concerning the Actions of Others, especially where they have no relation to

Themselves, or repugnance to their Interest, are commonly impartial; And from this we may judge, what Sense Men naturally have of the unalterable difference of Right and Wrong. Now the Observation which every one cannot but make in this Matter, is This; that Virtue and true Goodness, Righteousness and Equity, are things so truly noble and excellent, so lovely and venerable in themselves, and do so necessarily approve themselves to the Reason and Consciences of Men, that even those very Persons, who, by the prevailing Power of some Interest or Lust, are themselves drawn aside out of the Paths of Virtue, can yet hardly ever forbear to give it its true Character and Commendation in Others.

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At least, there is hardly any wicked Man, but when his own Case is represented to him under the Person of another, will freely enough pass Sentence against the wickedness he himself is guilty of, and, with sufficient severity, exclaim against all Iniquity. This shows abundantly, that all variation from the eternal Rule of Right, is absolutely and in the nature of the thing itself to be abhorred and detested, and that the unprejudiced mind of Man, as naturally disapproves injustice in moral matters, as in natural things it cannot but dissent from falsehood, or dislike incongruities. Even in reading the Histories of past and far distant Ages, where 'tis plain we can have no concern for the events of things, nor prejudices concerning the Characters of Persons, who is there, that does not praise and admire, nay highly esteem and in his imagination love (as it were) the Equity, Justice, Truth, and Fidelity of some Persons, and with the greatest indignation and Hatred, detest the Barbarity, Injustice, and Treachery of others? Nay further; When the prejudices of corrupt Minds lie all on the side of Injustice, as when we have obtained some very great profit or advantage through Another Man's Treachery or Breach of Faith, yet who is there, that upon That very occasion does not (even to a Proverb) dislike the Person and the Action,

how much soever he may rejoice at the Event? But when we come our selves to suffer by Iniquity, Then where are all the Arguments and Sophistries, by which Unjust Men, while they are oppressing others, would perswade themselves that they are not sensible of any natural difference between good and evil? When it comes to be these Men's own Case, to be oppressed by Violence, or over-reached by Fraud, where Then are all their Pleas against the eternal distinction of Right and Wrong? How, on the contrary, do they Then cry out for Equity, and exclaim against Injustice! How do they Then challenge and object against Providence, and think neither God nor Man severe enough, in punishing the Violaters of Right and Truth! Whereas, if there was no natural and eternal difference between Just and Unjust, no man could have any reason to complain of Injury, any other than what Laws and Compacts made so, which in innumerable Cases will be always to be evaded.

497 There is but one thing, that I am sensible of, which can here with any Colour be objected against what has been hitherto said concerning the Necessity of the Mind's giving its Assent to the eternal Law of Righteousness; And that is, the total Ignorance, which some whole Nations are reported to lie under, of the nature and force of these moral Obligations. I am not satisfied, the Matter of Fact is true. But if it was, yet mere Ignorance affords no just Objection against the Certainty of any Truth. Were there upon Earth a Nation of rational and considerate Persons, whose Notions concerning moral Obligations, and concerning the Nature and Force of them, were universally and directly contrary to what I have hitherto represented, this would be indeed a weighty Objection. But Ignorance and Stupidity are no Arguments against the Certainty of any thing. There are many Nations and People almost totally ignorant of the plainest Mathematical Truths, as, of the proportion, for Example, of a Square to a Triangle of the same Base and Height: And yet these

Truths are such, to which the Mind cannot but give its assent necessarily and unavoidably, as soon as they are distinctly proposed to it. All that this Objection proves therefore, supposing the Matter of it to be true, is only this ; not, that the mind of man can ever dissent from the rule of Right, much less, that there is no necessary difference in nature, between moral Good and Evil, any more than it proves, that there are no certain and necessary proportions of Numbers, Lines, or Figures : But this it proves only, that Men have great need to be taught and instructed in some very plain and easy, as well as certain Truths, and, if they be important Truths, that then men have need also to have them frequently inculcated, and strongly inforced upon them. Which is very true, and is (as shall hereafter be particularly made to appear) one good Argument for the reasonableness of expecting a Revelation.

498 4. Thus it appears in general, that the mind of Man cannot avoid giving its Assent to the eternal Law of Righteousness, that is, cannot but acknowledge the reasonableness and fitness of Men's governing all their Actions by the Rule of Right or Equity : And also that this Assent is a formal Obligation upon every Man, actually and constantly to conform himself to that Rule. I might now from hence deduce in particular, all the several Duties of Morality or Natural Religion. But because this would take up too large a portion of my intended Discourse, and may easily be supplied abundantly out of several late excellent Writers, I shall only mention the three great and principal Branches, from which all the other and smaller instances of duty do naturally flow, or may without difficulty be derived.

499 First then, in respect of God, the Rule of Righteousness is, that we keep up constantly in our Minds, the highest possible Honour, Esteem, and Veneration for him, which must express it self in proper and respective influences upon all our Passions, and in the suitable direction of all our Actions :

That we worship and adore Him, and Him alone, as the only supreme Author, Preserver and Governour of all things: That we employ our whole Beings, and all our Powers and Faculties, in his Service, and for his Glory, that is, in encouraging the practice of universal Righteousness, and promoting the Designs of his Divine Goodness amongst Men, in such way and manner as shall at any time appear to be his Will we should do it: And finally, that, to enable us to do this continually, we pray unto him constantly for whatever we stand in need of, and return him continual and hearty Thanks for whatever good things we at any time receive. There is no Congruity or Proportion, in the uniform disposition and correspondent order of any Bodies or Magnitudes, no Fitness or Agreement in the application of similar and equal Geometrical Figures one to another, or in the comparing them one with another, so visible and conspicuous, as is the Beauty and Harmony of the exercise of God's several Attributes, meeting with suitable returns of Duty and Honour from all his rational Creatures throughout the Universe.

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500 Secondly. In respect of our Fellow-Creatures, the Rule of Righteousness is, that in particular we so deal with every Man, as in like Circumstances we could reasonably expect he should deal with Us, and that in general we endeavour, by an universal Benevolence, to promote the welfare and happiness of all Men. The former Branch of this Rule, is Equity, the latter, is Love.

As to the former, viz. Equity: The Reason which obliges every Man in Practice, so to deal always with another, as he would reasonably expect that Others should in like Circumstances deal with Him, is the very same, as That which forces him in speculation to affirm, that if one Line or Number be equal to another, That other is reciprocally equal to It. Iniquity is the very same in Action, as Falsity or Contradiction

in Theory, and the same cause which makes the one absurd, makes the other unreasonable. Whatever relation or proportion one Man in any Case bears to another, the same That Other, when put in like Circumstances, bears to Him. Whatever I judge reasonable or unreasonable for another to do for Me, That, by the same Judgment, I declare reasonable or unreasonable, that I in the like Case should do for Him. And to deny this either in Word or Action, is as if a Man should contend, that, though two and three are equal to five, yet five are not equal to two and three. Wherefore, were not Men strangely and most unnaturally corrupted, by perverse and unaccountably false opinions, and monstrous evil customs and habits, prevailing against the clearest and plainest reason in the World, it would be impossible that universal Equity should not be practised by all Mankind, and especially among Equals, where the proportion of Equity is simple and obvious, and every Man's own case is already the same with all others, without any nice comparing or transposing of Circumstances. It would be as impossible that a Man, contrary to the eternal Reason of things, should desire to gain some small profit to Himself, by doing violence and damage to his Neighbour, as that he should be willing to be deprived of Necessaries himself, to satisfy the unreasonable Covetousness or Ambition of another. In a word ; it would be impossible for Men not to be as much ashamed of Doing Iniquity, as they are of

501 Believing Contradictions. In considering indeed the Duties of Superiors and Inferiors in various Relations, the proportion of Equity is somewhat more complex ; But still it may always be deduced from the same Rule of doing as we would be done by, if careful Regard be had at the same time to the difference of Relation : That is, if in considering what is fit for you to do to another, you always take into the account, not only every Circumstance of the Action, but also every Circumstance wherein the Person differs from you, and in judging what you would desire that Another, if your Circumstances were

transposed, should do to you, you always consider, not what any unreasonable Passion or private Interest would prompt you, but what impartial Reason would dictate to you to desire.

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502 The Second Branch of the Rule of Righteousness with respect to our Fellow-creatures, I said, was universal Love or Benevolence; that is, not only the doing barely what is just and right, in our dealings with every man, but also a constant indeavouring to promote in general, to the utmost of our power, the welfare and happiness of all men. The Obligation to which duty also, may easily be deduced from what has been already laid down. For if (as has been before proved) there be a natural and necessary difference between Good and Evil, and that which is Good is fit and reasonable, and that which is Evil is unreasonable to be done, and that which is the greatest Good, is always the most fit and reasonable to be chosen: Then, as the Goodness of God extends itself universally over all his Works through the whole Creation, by doing always what is absolutely best in the whole, so every rational Creature ought in its Sphere and Station, according to its respective powers and faculties, to do all the Good it can to all its Fellow-creatures. To which end, universal Love and Benevolence is as plainly the most direct, certain, and effectual means, as¹ in Mathematicks the flowing of a Point, is, to produce a Line, or in Arithmetick, the Addition of Numbers, to produce a Summ; or in Physicks, certain kinds of Motions, to preserve certain Bodies, which other kinds of Motions tend to corrupt. Of all

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which, the Mind of Man is so naturally sensible, that, except in such men whose Affections are prodigiously corrupted by most unnatural and habitual vicious practices, there is no Duty whatsoever, the performance whereof affords a man so¹ ample pleasure and satisfaction, and fills his mind with so comfortable a sense, of his having done the greatest Good he was capable to do, of his having best answered the ends of his Creation, and nearliest imitated the Perfections of his Creator, and consequently of his having fully complied with the highest and principal Obligations of his Nature, as the performance of this one Duty, of universal Love and Benevolence, naturally 503 affords. But further : The Obligation to this great Duty, may also otherwise be deduced from the Nature of Man, in the following manner. Next to that natural Self-Love, or Care of his own Preservation, which every one necessarily has in the first place for himself, there is in all Men a certain natural Affection for their Children and Posterity, who have a dependence upon them, and for their near Relations and Friends, who have an intimacy with them. And because the Nature of Man is such, that they cannot live comfortably in independent Families, without still further Society and Commerce with each other, therefore they naturally desire to increase their dependencies, by multiplying Affinities, and to enlarge their Friendships, by mutual good Offices, and to establish Societies, by a communication of Arts and Labour : Till by degrees the Affection of single Persons, becomes a Friendship of Families, and this enlarges it self to Society of Towns and Cities and Nations, and terminates in the agreeing Community of all Mankind. The Foundation, Preservation, and Perfection of which universal Friendship or Society,

¹ Angusta admodum est circa nostra tantummodo commoda, Laetitiae materia ; sed eadem erit amplissima, si aliorum omnium Felicitas cordi nobis sit. Quippe haec ad illam, eandem habebit proportionem, quam habet immensa Beatus Dei, totiusque humani generis, ad curam illam fictae felicitatis supellectilem, quam uni homini, eique invido & malevolo, fortunae bona possint suppeditare. Cumberland de Leg. Naturae, p. 214.

is mutual Love and Benevolence. And nothing hinders the World from being actually put into so happy a state, but perverse Iniquity and unreasonable want of mutual Charity. Wherefore since Men are plainly so constituted by Nature, that they stand in need of each other's assistance to make themselves easy in the World, and are fitted to live in Communities, and Society is absolutely necessary for them, and mutual Love and Benevolence is the only possible means to establish this Society in any tolerable and durable manner, and in This Respect All Men stand upon the same level, and have the same natural wants and desires, and are in the same need of each other's help, and are equally capable of enjoying the benefit and advantage of Society : 'Tis evident every Man is bound by the Law of his Nature, and as he is also prompted by the Inclination of his uncorrupted Affections, to look upon himself as a part and member of that one universal body or community, which is made up of all Mankind, to think himself born to promote the publick good and welfare of all his Fellow-creatures, and consequently obliged, as the necessary and only effectual means to that End, to embrace them All with universal Love and Benevolence : So that he cannot, without acting contrary to the Reason of his own mind, and transgressing the plain and known Law of his Being, do willingly any hurt and mischief to any Man ; no, not even to those who have first injured him ; but ought, for the publick benefit, to endeavour to appease with gentleness, rather than exasperate with retaliations ; and finally, to comprehend all in one word, (which is the top and compleat Perfection of this great Duty,) ought to Love all others as himself. This is the Argumentation of that great Master, Cicero, whose knowledge and understanding of the true state of Things, and of the original Obligations of human Nature, was as much greater than Mr. Hobbes's, as his helps and advantages to attain that knowledge, were less.

is, that every Man preserve his own Being, as long as he is able, and take care to keep himself at all times in such temper and disposition both of Body and Mind, as may best fit and enable him to perform his Duty in all other Instances. That is : he ought to bridle his Appetites, with Temperance, to govern his Passions, with Moderation, and to apply himself to the business of his present Station in the World, whatsoever it be, with Attention and Contentment. That every Man ought to preserve his own Being as long as he is able, is evident ; because what he is not himself the Author and Giver of, he can never of himself have just Power or Authority to take away. He that sent us into the World, and alone knows for how long time he appointed us our Station here, and when we have finished all the business he intended we should do, can alone judge when 'tis fit for us to be taken hence, and has alone Authority to dismiss and discharge us. This Reasoning has been admirably applied by Plato, Cicero, and others of the best Philosophers. So that though the Stoicks of old, and the Deists of late, have in their ranting Discourses, and some few of them in their rash Practice, contradicted it, yet they have never been able, with any colour of reason, to answer or evade the force of the Argument, which indeed, to speak the Truth, has been urged by the forementioned Philosophers, with such singular Beauty, as well as invincible Strength, that it seems not capable of having any thing added to it.

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505 For the same reason, that a Man is obliged to preserve his own Being at all, he is bound likewise to preserve himself, as far as he is able, in the right Use of all his Faculties, that is, to keep himself constantly in such temper both of Body and Mind, by regulating his Appetites and Passions, as may best fit and enable him to perform his Duty in all other instances. For, as it matters not whether a Soldier deserts his Post, or by Drunkenness renders himself incapable of performing his Duty in it, so for a Man to disable himself by any Intemperance

or Passion, from performing the necessary Duties of Life, is, at least for that time, the same thing as depriving himself of Life.

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Lastly: For the same Reason that a Man is obliged not to depart wilfully out of this Life, which is the general Station that God has appointed him, he is obliged likewise to attend the Duties of that particular Station or condition of life, whatsoever it be, wherein Providence has at present placed him, with diligence, and contentment, without being either uneasy and discontented, that Others are placed by Providence in different and superiour Stations in the World, or so extremely and unreasonably sollicitous to change his State for the future, as thereby to neglect his present Duty.

From these three great and general Branches, all the smaller and more particular Instances of Moral Obligations, may (as I said) easily be deduced.

506 5. And now this, (This eternal Rule of Equity, which I have been hitherto describing,) is That right Reason, which makes the principal Distinction between Man and Beasts. This is the Law of Nature, which (as Cicero excellently expressess it) is of universal extent, and everlasting duration; which can neither be wholly abrogated, nor repealed in any part of it, nor have any Law made contrary to it, nor be dispensed with by any Authority: Which was in force, before ever any Law was written, or the Foundation of any City or Commonwealth was laid: Which was not invented by the Wit of Man, nor established by the Authority of any People, but its Obligation was from eternity, and the Force of it reaches throughout the Universe: Which being founded in the Nature and Reason of Things, did not then begin to be a Law, when it was first written and enacted by Men, but is of the same original with the eternal Reasons or Proportions of things, and the Perfections or Attributes of God himself; So that if there was no Law at Rome against Rapes, at that time when Tarquin

offered violence to Lucretia, it does not therefore follow that he was at all the more excusable, or that his Sin against the eternal Rule of Equity was the less heinous. This is that Law of Nature¹, to which the Reason of all Men every where as naturally and necessarily assents, as all Animals conspire in the Pulse and Motion of their Heart and Arteries, or as all Men agree in their Judgment concerning the whiteness of Snow, or the Brightness of the Sun. For though in some nice Cases, the Bounds of right and wrong may indeed (as was before observed) be somewhat difficult to determine, and, in some few even plainer Cases, the Laws and Customs of certain barbarous Nations may be contrary one to another, (which Some have been so weak as to think a just Objection against there being any natural difference between Good and Evil at all;) yet in reality, this² no more disproves the natural Assent of all men's unprejudiced Reason to the Rule of Right and Equity, than the difference of mens Countenances in general, or the deformity of some few Monsters in particular, proves that there is no general Likeness or Uniformity in the Bodies of Men. For, whatever difference there may be in some particular Laws, 'tis certain as to the main and principal

¹ In judicio de bonitate harum rerum, aequo omnes ubique convenient, ac omnia Animalia in motu Cordis & Arteriarum pulsu, aut omnes homines in opinione de nivis candore & splendore Solis. Cumberland *de Leg. Naturae*. p. 167.

² Hoc tamen non magis ollit consensum hominum de generali Natura Boni, ejusque partibus vel speciebus praecipuis, quam levis vultuum diversitas tollit convenientiam inter homines in communi hominum definitione, aut similitudinem inter eos in partium principalium conformatio[n]e & usu. Nulla gens est, quae non sentiat actus deum diligendi, &c. Nulla gens non sentit gratitudinem erga parentes & benefactores, toti humano generi salutarem esse. Nulla temperamentorum diversitas facit ut quisquam non bonum esse sentiat universis, ut singulorum innocentium vitae, membra, & libertas coserventur. Cumberland *de Legib. Naturae*, p. 166.

Neque enim an honorifice de Deo sentiendum sit, neque an sit amandus, timendus, colendus, dubitari potest. Sunt enim haec Religionum, per omnes gentes communia. . . . Deum eo ipso, quod homines fecerit rationales, hoc illis praecedisse, & cordibus omnium insculpsisse, ne quisquam enigiam faceret, quod alium sibi facere iniquum duceret. Hobbes, *de Homine*, cap. 14. [Inconsistently enough with his own Principles.]

Branches of Morality, there never was any Nation upon Earth, but owned, that to Love and Honour God, to be grateful to Benefactors, to perform Equitable Compacts, to preserve the Lives of innocent and harmless Men, and the like, were things fitter and better to be practised, than the contrary. In fine: This is that Law of Nature, which, being founded in the eternal Reason of Things, is as absolutely unalterable, as natural Good and Evil, as Mathematical or Arithmetical Truths, as Light and Darkness, as Sweet and Bitter, as Pleasure and Pain.

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507 6. Further yet: As this Law of Nature is infinitely superior to all Authority of Men, and independent upon it, so its obligation, primarily and originally, is antecedent also even to this Consideration, of its being the positive Will or Command of God himself. For,¹ as the Addition of certain Numbers, necessarily produces a certain Sum, and certain Geometrical or Mechanical Operations, give a constant and unalterable Solution of certain Problems or Propositions, so in moral Matters, there are certain necessary and unalterable Respects or Relations of Things, which have not their Original from arbitrary and positive Constitution, but are of eternal necessity in their own Nature. For Example: ² As in Matters of Sense, the reason why a thing is visible, is not

¹ Denique nequis obligationem Legum naturalium arbitrariam & mutabilem a nobis fingi suspectur, hoc adjiciendum censui; Virtutum exercitium, habere rationem medii necessarii ab finem, (seposita consideratione Imperii Divini,) manente rerum natura tali qualis nunc est. Hoc autem ita intelligo, uti agnoscent plerique omnes, Additionem duarum unitatum duabus prius positis, necessario constituere numerum quaternarium; aut, uti praxes geometricae & mechanicae problemata proposita solvunt immutabiliter; adeo ut nec sapientia nec voluntas Divina cogitari possit quicquam in contrarium constituere posse. Cumberland *de Legib. Naturae*, p. 231.

² Τὸ δράμενον, οὐ διότι δράμενό γέ ἐστι, διὰ τοῦτο δρᾶται· ἀλλὰ τούναντίον διότι δρᾶται, ἀπὸ τοῦτο δράμενον. [Note, these words are by Ficinus ridicu- lously translated, *videtur* and *visum est*.] Οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸ δσιον, διότι δσιόν ἐστι, φιλεῖται ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν· ἀλλ' ὅτι φιλεῖται, διὰ τοῦτο δσιόν ἐστι. Plato in *Euthyphr.*

because 'tis Seen, but 'tis therefore Seen, because 'tis visible, so in Matters of natural Reason and morality, that which is Holy and Good (as Creatures depending upon and worshipping God, and practising Justice and Equity in their dealings with each other, and the like,) is not therefore Holy and Good, because 'tis commanded to be done, but is therefore commanded of God, because 'tis Holy and Good. The Existence indeed of the Things themselves, whose Proportions and Relations we consider, depend entirely on the mere arbitrary Will and good Pleasure of God, who can create Things when he pleases, and destroy them again whenever he thinks fit. But when things are created, and so long as it pleases God to continue them in Being, their Proportions, which are abstractly of eternal Necessity, are also in the Things themselves abso-
 508 lutely unalterable. Hence God himself, though he has no Superiour, from whose Will to receive any Law of his Actions, yet disdains not to observe the Rule of Equity and Goodness, as¹ the Law of all his Actions in the Government of the World ; and condescends to appeal even to Men, for the Equity and Righteousness of his Judgments. To this Law, the infinite Perfections of his Divine Nature make it necessary for him (as has been before proved,) to have constant regard : And (as a learned Prelate of our own² has excellently shown,)

¹ Καθ' ἡμᾶς γὰρ ἡ αὐτὴ ἀρετὴ ἐστι τῶν μακαρίων πάντων· ὥστε καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ ἀρετὴ ἀνθρώπου καὶ Θεοῦ. Origen, *advers. Celsum*, lib. 4.

² Dictamina Divini Intellectus sanciuntur in Leges apud ipsum valituras, per immutabilitatem suarum perfectionum. Cumberland *de Leg. Naturae*, p. 343.

Solebam ipse quidem, cum aliis plurimis, antequam dominii jurisque omnis originem universaliter & distinete considerassem : dominium Dei, in Creationem velut integrum ejus originem, resolvere. Verum quoniam, &c. . . . in hanc tandem concessi sententiam, dominium Dei esse jus vel potestatem ei a sua Sapientia & Bonitate, velut a Lege, datam ad regimen eorum omnium quae ab ipso unquam creata fuerint vel creabuntur. . . . Nec poterit quisquam merito conqueri, dominium Dei intra nimis angustos limites hac explicatione coerceri ; qua hoc unum dicitur, illius nullam partem consistere in potestate quicquam faciendi contra finem optimum, Bonum commune. *Idem*. pp. 345, 346.

Contrà autem, Hobbiana resolutio dominii Divini in potentiam ejus

not barely his infinite Power, but the Rules of this eternal Law, are the true Foundation and the Measure of his Dominion over his Creatures. (For if infinite Power was the Rule and Measure of Right, 'tis evident that Goodness and Mercy and all Other Divine Perfections, would be empty words without any Signification at all.) Now for the same Reason that God who hath no Superiour to determine him, yet constantly directs all his own Actions by the eternal Rule of Justice and Goodness, 'tis evident all Intelligent Creatures in their several Spheres and Proportions, ought to obey the same Rule according to the Law of their Nature, even though it could be supposed separate from that additional Obligation, of its being the positive Will and Command of God.

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509 7. Lastly, This Law of Nature has its full obligatory Power, antecedent to all Consideration of any particular private and personal Reward or Punishment, annexed either by natural Consequence, or by positive Appointment, to the Observance or Neglect of it. This also is very evident : Because, if Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, Fitness and Unfitness of being practised, be (as has been shown) originally, eternally, and necessarily, in the nature of the Things themselves, 'tis plain that the view of particular Rewards or Punishments, which is only an After-consideration, and does not at all alter the nature of Things, cannot be the original Cause of the Obligation of the Law, but is only an additional Weight to enforce the practice of what men were before obliged to by right Reason. There is no Man, who has any just Sense of the difference between Good and Evil, but must needs acknowledge, that

irresistibilem adeo apertè ducit ad, &c. . . . ut mihi dubium non sit, illud ab eo factum fuisse, Deoque attributum, in eum tantum finem, ut juri suo omnium in omnia patrocinaretur. *Id.* p. 344.

Nos è contrario, fontem indicavimus, è quo demonstrari potest, Justitiam universalem, omnemque adeo Virtutem moralem, quae in Rectore requiritur, in Deo p[ro]e caeteris resulgere, eadem planè methodo, qua homines ad eas excolendas obligari ostendemus. *Id.* p. 347.

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wonderful and to be admired. But yet, after all this, 'tis plain that the general Practice of Virtue in the World, can never be supported upon this Foot. The Discourse is admirable, but it seldom goes further than meer Words, and the Practise of those few who have acted accordingly, has not been imitated by the rest of the World. Men never will generally, and indeed 'tis not very reasonably to be expected they should, part with all the Comforts of Life, and even Life itself, without expectation of any future Recompence. So that, if we suppose no future State of Rewards, it will follow that God has endued Men with such Faculties, as put them under a necessity of approving and chusing Virtue in the Judgment of their own Minds, and yet has not given them wherewith to support themselves in the suitable and constant Practice of it. The Consideration of which inexplicable Difficulty, ought to have led the Philosophers to a firm belief and expectation of a future State of Rewards and Punishments, without which their whole Scheme of Morality cannot be supported. And, because a thing of such necessity and importance to Mankind, was not more clearly and directly and universally made known, it might naturally have led them to some farther Consequences also, which I shall have occasion particularly to deduce hereafter.

511 Thus have I endeavoured to deduce the original Obligations of Morality, from the necessary and eternal Reason and Proportions of Things. Some have chosen to found all Difference¹ of Good and Evil, in the mere positive Will and Power of God: But the Absurdity of This, I have shown elsewhere. Others have contended, that all Difference of Good and Evil, and all Obligations of Morality, ought to be founded originally upon Considerations of Publick Utility. And true indeed it is, in the whole; that the Good of the universal Creation, does always coincide with the necessary Truth and Reason of Things. But otherwise, (and separate from This Considera-

¹ Cùm omnis ratio Veri & Boni ab ejus Omnipotentiâ dependeat. *Cartes. Epist. 6, partis secundae.*

tion, that God will certainly cause Truth and Right to terminate in Happiness;) what is for the Good of the whole Creation, in very many Cases, none but an infinite Understanding can possibly judge. Publick Utility, is one thing to One Nation, and the contrary to Another, and the Governours of every Nation, will and must be Judges of the Publick Good, and by Publick Good, they will generally mean the Private Good of that particular Nation. But Truth and Right (whether Publick or Private) founded in the eternal and necessary Reason of Things, is what every Man can judge of, when laid before him. 'Tis necessarily One and the Same, to every man's Understanding, just as Light is the Same, to every man's Eyes.

512 He who thinks it Right and Just, upon account of Publick Utility, to break Faith (suppose) with a Robber, let him consider, that 'tis much more useful to do the same by a Multitude of Robbers, by Tyrants, by a Nation of Robbers: And then, all Faith is evidently at an end. For,—*mutato nomine, de Te*—What Fidelity and Truth are, is understood by every Man, but between two Nations at War, who shall be Judge, which of them are the Robbers? Besides: To rob a Man of Truth and of eternal Happiness, is worse than robbing him of his Money and of his temporal Happiness: And therefore it will be said that Hereticks may even more justly, and with much greater Utility to the Publick, be deceived and destroyed by Breach of Trust and Faith, than the most cruel Robbers. Where does this terminate?

And now, from what has been said upon this Head, 'tis easy to see the Falsity and Weakness of Mr. Hobbes's Doctrines; That there is no such thing as Just and Unjust, Right and Wrong originally in the Nature of Things; That Men in their natural State, antecedent to all Compacts, are not obliged to universal Benevolence, nor to any moral Duty whatsoever, but are in a state of War, and have every one a Right to do whatever he has Power to do; And that, in

Civil Societies, it depends wholly upon positive Laws or the Will of Governours, to define what shall be Just or Unjust. The contrary to all which, having been already fully demonstrated, there is no need of being large, in further disproving and confuting particularly these Assertions themselves. I shall therefore only mention a few Observations, from which some of the greatest and most obvious Absurdities of the chief Principles, upon which Mr. Hobbes builds his whole Doctrine in this Matter, may most easily appear.

513 1. First then ; the Ground and Foundation of Mr. Hobbes's Scheme, is this ; that¹ All Men, being equal by nature, and naturally desiring the same things, have² every one a Right to every Thing, are every one desirous to have absolute Dominion over all others, and may every One justly do whatever at any time is in his Power, by violently taking from Others either their Possessions or Lives, to gain to himself that absolute Dominion. Now this is exactly the same thing, as if a man should affirm, that a Part is equal to the Whole, or that one Body can be present in a Thousand Places at once. For, to say that one man has a full Right to the same individual things, which another man at the same time has a full Right to, is saying that two Rights may be³ contradictory to each other ; that is, that a thing may be Right, at the same time that 'tis confessed to be Wrong. For instance ; If every Man has a Right to preserve his own Life, then⁴ 'tis manifest I can have no Right to take any man's Life

¹ Ab aequalitate Naturae oritur unicuique ea, quae cupid, acquirendi Spes. *Leviath.* c. 13.

² Natura dedit unicuique jus in omnia. Hoc est ; in statu merè naturali, sive antequam homines ullis pactis sese invicem obstrinxissent unicuique licebat facere quaecunque & in quoscunque libebat ; & possidere, uti, frui omnibus, quae volebat & poterat. *De Cive*, c. 1, § 10.

³ Si impossibile sit singulis, omnes & omnia sibimet subjicere ; ratio quae hunc finem proponit singulis, qui uni tantum contingere potest, saepius quam millies proponeret impossibile, & semel tantum possibile. Cumberl. *de Leg. Nat.* p. 217.

⁴ Nec potest cujusquam jus seu libertas ab ulla lege relicat eo extendere ut liceat oppugnare ea, quae aliis eadem Lege imperantur facienda. *Id.* p. 219.

away from him, unless he has first forfeited his own Right, by attempting to deprive me of mine. For otherwise, it might be Right for me to do That, which at the same time, because it could not be done but in breach of another Man's Right, it could not be Right for me to do: Which is the greatest Absurdity in the World. The true State of this Case therefore, is plainly this. In Mr. Hobbes's State of Nature and Equality, every man having an equal right to preserve his own Life, 'tis evident every man has a right to an equal proportion of all those things, which are either necessary or useful to Life. And consequently so far is it from being true, that any One has an original right to possess All, that, on the contrary, whoever first attempts, without the consent of his Fellows, and except it be for some publick Benefit, to take to himself more than his Proportion, is the Beginner of Iniquity, and the Author of all succeeding Mischief.

514 2. To avoid this Absurdity therefore, Mr. Hobbes is forced to assert in the next place, that since every Man has confessedly a right to preserve his own Life, and consequently to do every thing that is necessary to preserve it, and since in the State of Nature, men will necessarily have¹ perpetual jealousies and suspicions of each other's incroaching, therefore just precaution gives every one a Right to² endeavour, for his own Security, to prevent, oppress, and destroy all others, either by secret Artifice or open Violence, as it shall happen at any time to be in his Power, as being the³ only certain means of Self-preservation. But this is even a plainer Absurdity, if possible, than the former. For (besides that according to Mr. Hobbes's Principles, Men, before positive Compacts, may justly do what mischief they please, even

¹ *Omnium adversus omnes, perpetuae Suspiciones. . . . Bellum omnium in Omnes.* *De Cive*, c. 1, § 12.

² *Spes unicuique securitatis conservationisque suae in eo sita est, ut viribus artibusque propriis proximum suum vel palam vel ex insidiis praeoccupare possit.* *Ibid.* c. 5, § 1.

³ *Securitatis viam meliorem habet nemo Anticipatione.* *Leviath.* c. 13.

without the pretence of Self-preservation;) what can be more ridiculous, than to imagin a War of All Men against All, the directest and certainest Means of the Preservation of all? Yes, says he, because it leads Men to a necessity of entring into Compact for each other's Security. But then to make these Compacts obligatory, he is forced (as I shall presently observe more particularly) to recur to an antecedent Law of Nature: And this destroys all that he had before said. For the same Law of Nature which obliges Men to Fidelity, after having made a Compact, will unavoidably, upon all the same Accounts, be found to oblige them, before all Compacts, to Contentment and mutual Benevolence, as the readiest and certainest Means to the Preservation and Happiness of them All. 'Tis true, men by entring into Compacts and making Laws, agree to Compel one another to do what perhaps the mere sense of Duty, however really obligatory in the highest degree, would not, without such Compacts, have force enough of itself to hold them to in Practice: And so, Compacts must be acknowledged to be in fact a great Addition and Strengthening of Men's Security. But this Compulsion makes no alteration in the Obligation itself, and only shows, that That entirely lawless State, which Mr. Hobbes calls the State of Nature, is by no means truly Natural, or in any sense suitable to the Nature and Faculties of Man, but on the contrary, is a State of extremely unnatural and Intolerable Corruption, as I shall presently prove more fully from some other Considerations.

515 3. Another notorious Absurdity and Inconsistency in Mr. Hobbes's Scheme, is this: That he all along supposes Some particular Branches of the Law of Nature, (which he thinks necessary for the Foundation of some parts of his own Doctrine,) to be originally obligatory from the bare Reason of Things, at the same time that he denies and takes away innumerable others, which have plainly in the Nature and Reason of things the same Foundation of being obligatory as the former, and without which the obligation

of the former can never be solidly made out and defended. Thus he supposes that in the State of Nature, before any Compact be made, every¹ Man's own Will is his only Law, that² nothing a Man can do, is Unjust, and that³ whatever Mischief one Man does to another, is no Injury nor Injustice, neither has the Person, to whom the Mischief is done, how great soever it be, any just Reason to complain of Wrong; (I think it may here reasonably be presumed, that if Mr. Hobbes had lived in such a State of Nature, and had happened to be himself the Suffering Party, he would in this case have been of another Opinion:) And yet at the same time he supposes, that in the same State of Nature, Men are by all means obliged⁴ to seek Peace, and⁵ to enter into Compacts to remedy the fore-mentioned Mischiefs. Now if Men are obliged by the original reason and nature of things to seek terms of Peace, and to get out of the pretended natural State of War, as soon as they can, how come they not to be obliged originally by the same reason and nature of things, to live from the beginning in universal Benevolence, and avoid entring into the State of War at all? He must needs confess they would be obliged to do so, did not Self-preservation necessitate them every man to War upon others: But this cannot be true of the first Aggressor, whom yet Mr. Hobbes, in the⁶ place now cited, vindicates from being guilty of any Injustice: And

516 therefore herein he unavoidably contradicts himself. Thus again; in most instances of Morality, he supposes Right and

¹ Unicuique licebat facere quaecunque libebat. *De Cive*, c. 1, § 10.

² Consequens est, ut Nihil dicendum sit Injustum. *Nomina Justi & Injusti*, locum in hac conditione non habent. *Leviath.* c. 13.

³ Ex his sequitur, Injuriam nemini fieri posse, nisi ei quocum initur pactum. . . . Si quis alicui noceat, quocum nihil pactus est; damnum ei infert, non Injuriam. . . . Etenim si is qui damnum recipit, injuriam expostularet; is qui fecit sic diceret, quid tu mihi? quare facerem ego tuo potius, quam meo libitu? &c. In qua ratione, ubi nulla intercesserunt pacta, non video quid sit quod possit reprehendi. *De Cive*, c. 3, § 4.

⁴ Prima & fundamentalis Lex Naturae est, quaerendam esse pacem, ubi haberi potest, &c. *De Cive*, c. 2, § 2.

⁵ See *de Cive*, cap. 2 and 3.

⁶ Ex his sequitur, Injuriam nemini fieri posse, &c.

Wrong, Just and Unjust to have no Foundation in the Nature of Things, but to depend entirely on positive Laws; that¹ the Rules or Distinctions of Good and Evil, Honest and Dishonest, are mere civil Constitutions, and whatever the Chief Magistrate Commands, is to be accounted Good, whatever he forbids, Evil: that² 'tis the Law of the Land only, which makes Robbery to be Robbery, or Adultery, to be Adultery: that³ the Commandments, to Honour our Parents, to do no Murder, not to commit Adultery, and all the other Laws of God and Nature, are no further obligatory, than the Civil Power shall think fit to make them so: nay, that⁴ where the Supreme Authority commands men to worship God by an Image or Idol, in Heathen Countries, (for in this instance he cautiously excepts Christian ones,) 'tis lawful and their Duty to do it: and (agreeably, as a natural Consequence to all This,) that⁵ 'tis men's positive Duty to obey the Com-

¹ Regulas boni & mali, justi & injusti, honesti & inhonesti, esse leges civiles; ideoque quod legislator praeceperit, id pro bono; quod vetuerit, id pro malo habendum esse. *De Cive*, c. 12, § 1.

Quod Actio justa vel injusta sit, a jure imperantis provenit. Reges legitimi quae imperant, justa faciunt imperando; quae vetant, vetando faciunt injusta. *De Cive*, c. 12, § 1. [In which Section 'tis worth observing, how he ridiculously interprets those Words of Solomon, (Dabis servo tuo cor docile, ut possit Discernere inter bonum & malum,) to signify, not his Understanding or Discerning, but his Decreeing what shall be good, and what evil.]

² Si tamen Lex civilis jubeat invadere aliquid, non est illud Furtum, Aduterium, &c. *De Cive*, c. 14, § 10.

³ Sequitur ergo, legibus illis, non Occides, non Maechabere, non Furabere, Parentes honorabis; nihil aliud praecepisse Christum, quam ut cives & subditi suis Principibus & summis Imperatoribus in quaestionibus omnibus circa meum, tuum, suum, alienum, absolute obedirent. *De Cive*, c. 17, § 10.

⁴ Si quaeratur an obediendum civitati sit, si imperetur Deum colere sub Imagine, coram iis qui id fieri honorificum esse putant; certè faciendum est. *De Cive*, c. 15, § 18.

⁵ Universaliter & in omnibus obedire obligamur. *De Cive*, c. 14, § 10.

Doctrina alia, quae Obedientiae civili repugnat, est, quicquid faciat civis quicunque contra conscientiam suam, peccatum esse. *Leviath.* c. 29.

Opinio eorum qui docent, peccare subditos, quoties mandata Principum suorum, quae sibi Injusta videntur esse, exsequuntur; & erronea est, & inter eas numeranda, quae obedientiae civili adversantur. *De Cive*, c. 12, § 2.

mands of the Civil Power in all things, even in things clearly and directly against their Conscience, (that is, that 'tis their positive Duty to do That, which at the same time they know plainly 'tis their Duty not to do:) ' keeping up indeed always in their own Minds, an inward desire to observe the Laws of Nature and Conscience, but not being bound to observe them in their outward Actions, except when 'tis safe so to do: (He might as well have said, that Humane Laws and Constitutions have² Power to make Light be Darkness, and Darkness Light, to make Sweet be Bitter, and Bitter Sweet: And indeed, as one Absurdity will naturally lead a Man into another, he does say something very like it: namely that the Civil Authority is to judge of all Opinions and Doctrines whatsoever, to determine Questions Philosophical, Mathematical, and, because indeed the signification of Words is arbitrary, even Arithmetical ones also; as, whether a man shall presume to affirm that Two and Three make Five or not:) And yet at the same time, Some particular things, which it would either have been too flagrantly scandalous for him to have made depending upon humane Laws, as that³ God is to be Loved, Honoured and Adored, that⁴ a man ought not to Murder his Parents, And the like, or else, which were of necessity to be supposed for the Foundation of his own Scheme, as that⁵ Compacts ought to be faithfully performed,

¹ Concludendum est, Legem Nutrae semper & ubique obligare in Foro interno, sive conscientia; non semper in Foro externo; sed tum solummodo, cum secure id fieri possit. *De Cive*, c. 3.

² Quae si tanta potentia est stultorum sententiis atque jussis, ut eorum suffragiis rerum natura vertatur; cur non sanciunt, ut quae mala perniciose sunt, habeantur pro bonis ac salutaribus? *Cicero de Legib.* lib. 1.

³ Neque enim an honorificè de Deo sentiendum sit, neque an sit amandus, timendus, colendus, dubitari potest. Sunt enim haec Religionum per omnes gentes communia. *De Homine*, c. 14.

⁴ Si is qui summum habet imperium, seipsum, imperantem dico, interficere alicui imperet; non tenetur. Neque Parentem, &c. cum filius mori quam vivere infamis atque exosus malit. Et alii casus sunt, cum mandata factu inhonesta sunt, &c. *De Cive*, c. 6, § 13.

⁵ Lex naturalis est, Pactis standum esse, sive Fidem observandam esse. *De Cive*, c. 3, § 1.

and Obedience¹ to be duly paid to Civil Powers : The Obligation of These Things, he is forced to deduce intirely from the internal Reason and Fitness of the Things themselves,² antecedent to, independent upon, and unalterable by all Humane Constitutions whatsoever. In which matter, he is guilty of the grossest Absurdity and Inconsistency that can be. For if those greatest and strongest of all our Obligations, to Love and Honour God, for instance, or, to perform Compacts faithfully, depend not at all on any Humane Constitution, but must of Necessity (to avoid making Obligations reciprocally depend on each other in a Circle) be confessed to arise originally from, and be founded in, the eternal Reason and unalterable Nature and Relations of Things themselves, and the nature and force of these Obligations be sufficiently clear and evident, so that he who³ Dishonours God, or⁴ wilfully breaks his Faith, is (according to Mr. Hobbes's own Reasoning) guilty of as great an Absurdity in Practice, and of as plainly contradicting the right reason of his own Mind, as he who in a Dispute is reduced to a necessity of asserting something inconsistent with itself, and the original Obligation to these Duties, can from hence only be distinctly deduced : Then, for the same reason, all the other Duties likewise of natural Religion, such as universal Benevolence, Justice, Equity, and the like, (which

¹ Lex naturalis omnes leges civiles jubet observari. *De Cive*, c. 14, § 10.

² Legem Civilem, quae non sit lata in contumeliam Dei (cujus respectu ipsae Civitates non sunt sui juris, nec dicuntur leges ferre, &c.). *De Cive*, c. 14, § 10.

Pacti violatio, &c. See *de Cive*, c. 3, § 3.

³ See *de Cive*, c. 14, § 10.

⁴ Est Similitudo quaedam inter id, quod in vita communi vocatur Injuria, & id, quod in Scholis solet appellari Absurdum. Quemadmodum enim is, qui argumentis cogitur ad negationem assertionis quam prius assuerat, dicitur redigi ad Absurdum : eodem modo is, qui prae animi impotentia facit vel omittit id quod se non facturum vel non omissurum pacto suo ante promiserat, Injuriam facit : neque minus in contradictionem incidit, quam qui in Scholis reducitur ad Absurdum. . . . Est itaque Injuria, Absurditas quaedam in conversatione ; sicut Absurditas, Injuria quaedam est in disputatione. *De Cive*, c. 3, § 3.

I have before proved to receive in like manner their Power of obliging, from the eternal Reason and Relations of Things;) must needs be obligatory, antecedent to any consideration of positive Compact, and unalterably and independently on all Humane Constitutions whatsoever: And consequently Mr. Hobbes's whole Scheme, (both of a State of Nature at first, wherein there was no such thing as Right or Wrong, Just or Unjust, at all; and of these things depending afterwards, by virtue of Compact, wholly and absolutely on the positive and arbitrary determination of the Civil Power;) falls this way entirely to the Ground, by his having been forced to suppose some particular things obligatory, originally, and in their own nature. On the contrary: If the Rules of Right and Wrong, Just and Unjust, have none of them any obligatory force in the State of Nature, antecedent to positive Compact, then, for the same Reason, neither will they be of any force after the Compact, so as to afford men any certain and real security; (Excepting only what may arise from the Compulsion of Laws, and Fear of Punishment, which therefore, it may well be supposed, is all that Mr. Hobbes really means at the bottom.) For if there be no Obligation of Just and Right antecedent to the Compact, then Whence arises the Obligation of the Compact itself, on which he supposes all other Obligations to be founded? If, before any Compact was made, it was no Injustice for a man to take away the Life of his Neighbour, not for his own Preservation, but merely to satisfy an ¹ arbitrary humour or pleasure, and without any reason or provocation at all, how comes it to be an Injustice, after he has made a Compact, to break and neglect it? Or What is it that makes breaking one's Word, to be a greater and more unnatural Crime, than killing a Man merely for no other reason,

¹ Ex his sequitur, injuriam nemini fieri posse, nisi ei quocum initur pactum.
De Cive, c. 3, § 4. [Which whole Section highly deserves to be read and well considered, as containing the Secret of Mr. Hobbes's whole Scheme.]

but because no positive Compact has been made to the contrary? So that¹ this way also, Mr. Hobbes's whole Scheme is intirely destroyed.

517 4. That State, which Mr. Hobbes calls the State of Nature, is not in any sense a Natural State, but a State of the greatest, most unnatural, and most intolerable Corruption, that can be imagined. For Reason, which is the proper Nature of Man, can never (as has been before shown) lead men to any thing else than universal Love and Benevolence, and Wars, Hatred, and Violence, can never arise but from extreme Corruption. A Man may sometimes, 'tis true, in his own Defence be necessitated, in compliance with the Laws of Nature and Reason, to make war upon his Fellows: But the first Aggressours, who upon Mr. Hobbes's Principles, (that all Men² have a natural Will to hurt each other, and that every one in the State of Nature has a³ Right to do whatever he has a Will to :) The first Aggressours, I say, who upon these Principles assault and violently spoil as many as they are superiour to in Strength, without any regard to Equity or Proportion, these can never, by any colour whatsoever, be excused from having⁴ utterly devested themselves of Humane Nature, and having⁵ introduced into the World, contrary to all the Laws of Nature and

¹ Itaque patet quod, si Hobbiana ratiocinatio esset valida, omnis simul Legum Civilium obligatio collaboretur; nec aliter fieri potest quin earum vis labefactetur ab omnibus principiis, quae Legum naturalium vim tollunt aut minuant; quoniam his fundatur & regiminis civilis auctoritas, ac securitas, & legum à civitatibus latarum vigor. *Cumberland de Leg. Nat.* p. 303.

Etiam extra regimen civile, à malis omnigenis simul consideratis tunc erit, qui actibus externis Leges Naturae constantissime observabit; quam qui juxta doctrinam Hobbianam, vi aut insidiis alias omnes conando praecoccupare, securitatem sibi quaesiverit. *Id. p. 304.*

² Voluntas laedendi, omnibus inest in statu Naturae. *De Cive*, c. 1, § 4.

³ In statu naturali, unicuique licebat facere quaecunque & in quoscunque libebat. *Ibid. § 10.*

⁴ Si nihil existimat contra naturam fieri, hominibus violandis; quid cum eo differas, qui omnino hominem ex homine tollat? *Cic. de Offic. lib. 3.*

⁵ Τάδε καὶ δίκαια οὐδὲ εἶναι τοπαράπαν φύσει· . . . γιγνόμενα τέχνη καὶ τοῖς νόμοις, ἀλλ' οὐ δῆ τινι φύσει· . . . Φασκόντων εἶναι τὸ δικαιότατον δέ, τι τις ἀν νικᾷ βιαζόμενος. οὕτων ἀσεβεῖαι τε καὶ στάσεις· . . . οὗσην λάθην ἀνθράπων νέων δημοσίᾳ πόλεσι τε καὶ ἰδίους οἴκους. *Plato de Leg. lib. 10.*

Reason, the greatest Calamities and most unnatural Confusion, that Mankind by the highest Abuse of their natural Powers and Faculties, are capable of falling under. Mr. Hobbes pretends indeed, that one of the first and most natural Principles of humane Life, is¹ a Desire necessarily arising in every man's Mind, of having Power and Dominion over Others, and that this naturally impels men to use Force and Violence to obtain it. But neither is it true, that Men, following the dictates of Reason and uncorrupted Nature, desire disproportionate Power and Dominion over others ; neither, if it was natural to desire such Power, would it at all follow, that it was agreeable to nature to use violent and hurtful means to obtain it. For since the only natural and good reason to desire Power and Dominion (more than what is necessary for every man's Self-preservation) is, that the Possessor of such Power may have a larger compass and greater Abilities and Opportunities of doing good, (as is evident from God's exercise of perfectly Absolute Power;) 'tis plain that no man, obeying the uncorrupted Dictates of Nature and Reason, can desire to increase his Power by such destructive and pernicious Methods, the prevention of which is the only good reason that makes the Power itself truly desirable. All Violence therefore and War are plainly the Effects, not of natural Desires, but of unnatural and extreme Corruption. And this Mr. Hobbes himself unwarily proves against himself, by those very Arguments, whereby he indeavours to prove that War and Contention is more natural to Men, than to Bees or Ants. For his Arguments on this Head, are all drawn from Men's using themselves (as the Animals he is speaking of, cannot do,) to² Strive about Honours and Dignities, 'till the Contention

¹ Homines Libertatis & Dominii per naturam amatores. *Leviath.* c. 17.
Nemini dubium esse debet, quin avidius ferrentur homines natura sua, si metus abesset, ad Dominationem quam ad Societatem. *De Cive,* c. 1, § 2.

² Homines inter se de Honoribus & Dignitatibus perpetuo contendunt; sed Animalia illa [Apes & Formicæ] non item. Itaque inter Homines Invidia, Odium, Bellum, &c. *Leviath.* c. 17.

grows up into Hatred, Seditions and Wars ; to ¹ separate each one his private Interest from the publick, and value himself highly above others, upon getting and engrossing to himself more than his Proportion of the things of Life ; to ² find fault with each other's management, and, through Self-conceit, bring in continual Innovation and distractions ; to ³ impose one upon another, by Lyes, Falsifying, and deceit, calling good evil, and evil good ; to ⁴ grow envious at the prosperity of others, or proud and domineering when themselves are in ease and plenty ; and to ⁵ keep up tolerable Peace and Agreement among themselves, merely by artificial Compacts, and the compulsion of Laws. All which things, are so far from being truly the Natural Effects and result of men's reason and other Faculties, that on the contrary they are evidently some of the grossest Abuses and most unnatural Corruptions thereof, that any one who was arguing on the opposite side of the question, could easily have chosen to have instanced in.

518 5. Lastly : The chief and principal Argument, which is one of the main Foundations of Mr. Hobbes's and his Followers' System, namely, that ⁶ God's irresistible Power is the only

¹ Inter Animalia illa, Bonum publicum & privatum idem est. . . . Homini autem in bonis propriis nihil tam jucundum est, quam quod alienis sunt majora. *Leviath.* c. 17.

² Animantia quae rationem non habent nullum defectum vident, vel videre se putant, in administratione suarum rerum publicarum. Sed in multitudine Hominum, plurimi sunt qui prae caeteis sapere existimantes, conantur res novare ; Et diversi novatores innovant diversis modis ; id quod est distractio & bellum civile. *De Cive,* c. 5, § 5.

³ Animantia illa verborum arte illa carent, qua homines alii aliis videri faciunt Bonum Malum, & Malum Bonum ; Magnum Parvum, & Parvum Magnum. *Leviath.* c. 17.

⁴ Animalia bruta, quamdiu bene sibi est, caeteris non invident : Homo autem tum maxime molestus est, quando otio opibusque maximè abundat. *Ibid.*

⁵ Consensio creaturarum illarum brutarum, naturalis est ; hominum pactitia tantum, id est, artificiosa. *De Cive,* c. 5, § 5.

⁶ Regni Divini naturalis Jus derivatur ab eo, quod Divinae Potentiae resistere impossibile est. *Leviath.* c. 31.

In regno naturali, regnandi & puniendo eos qui leges suas violant, jus Deo est à sola potentia irresistibili. *De Cive,* c. 15, § 5.

Iis quorum Potentiae resisti non potest, & per consequens Deo omnipotenti, jus Dominandi ab ipsa potentia derivatur. *Ibid.*

foundation of his Dominion, and the only measure of his Right over his Creatures, and consequently,¹ that every Other Being has just so much Right, as it has natural Power; that is, that 'tis naturally Right for every thing to do whatever it has Power to do: This Argument, I say, is of all his others the most notoriously false and absurd. As may sufficiently appear, (besides what has been already said, of God's Other Perfections being² as much the measure of his Right, as his Power is,) from this single Consideration. Suppose the Devil, (for when men run into extreme impious assertions they must be answered with suitable Suppositions;) Suppose, I say, such a Being as we conceive the Devil to be, of extreme malice, cruelty, and iniquity, was indued with supreme absolute Power, and made use of it only to render the World as miserable as was possible, in the most cruel, arbitrary, and unequal manner that can be imagined: Would it not follow undeniably, upon Mr. Hobbes's Scheme, since Dominion is founded in Power, and Power is the measure of Right, and consequently Absolute Power gives Absolute Right, that such a Government as this, would not only be as much of Necessity indeed to be submitted to, but also that it would be as Just and Right, and with as little reason to be complained of, as is the present Government of the World in the Hands of the Ever-blessed and infinitely Good God, whose Love and Goodness and tender Mercy appears every where over all the Works.

519 Here Mr. Hobbes, as an unanswerable Argument in defence of his Assertion, urges, that³ the only Reason, why Men are

¹ Nam quoniam Deus jus ad omnia habet; & jus Dei nihil aliud est quam ipsa Dei potentia; hinc sequitur unamquamque rem naturalem tantum juris ex natura habere, quantum potentiae habet. Spinoz. *de Monarch.* cap. 2. [See also *Tractat. Theolog. politie.* cap. 16.]

² See Cumberland, *de Leg. Naturae*, locis supra citatis.

³ Quod si jus regnandi habeat Deus ab Omnipotentia sua, manifestum est Obligationem ad praestandum ipsi obedientiam, incumbere hominibus propter imbecillitatem. [To explain which, he adds in his Note:] Si cui durum hoc videbitur, illum rogo ut tacita cogitatione considerare velit, si essent duo Omnipotentes, uter utri obediere obligaretur. Confitebitur,

bound to obey God, is plainly nothing but Weakness or Want of Power, because, if they themselves were All-powerful, 'tis manifest they could not be under any Obligation to obey, and consequently Power would give them an undoubted Right to do what they pleased. That is to say: If Men were not created and dependent Beings, 'tis true they could not indeed be obliged to the proper Relative Duty of created and dependent Beings, viz. to obey the Will and Command of Another in things Positive. But from their Obligation to the Practice of Moral Virtues, of Justice, Righteousness, Equity, Holiness, Purity, Goodness, Beneficence, Faithfulness and Truth, from which Mr. Hobbes fallaciously in this Argument, and most impiously in his whole Scheme, indeavours ¹ to discharge them, from this they could not be discharged by any addition of Power whatsoever. Because the obligation to these things is not, as the obligation to obey in things of arbitrary and positive Constitution, founded only in the Weakness, Subjection, and Dependency of the Persons obliged; but also and chiefly in the eternal and unchangeable Nature and Reason of the Things themselves. For, these things are the Law of God himself; not only to his Creatures, but also to Himself, as being the Rule of all his own Actions in the Government of the World.

520 I have been the longer upon this Head, because Moral Virtue is the Foundation and the Sum, the Essence and the Life of all true Religion, for the Security whereof, all positive Institution was principally designed, for the Restoration whereof, all revealed Religion was ultimately intended, and inconsistent wherewith, or in opposition to which, all Doctrines whatsoever, supported by what pretence of Reason or

credo, neutrum neutri obligari. Hoc si verum est, verum quoque est quod posui, homines ideo Deo subjectos esse, quia omnipotentes non sunt. *De Cive*, c. 15. § 7.

¹ Ut enim omittam vim & naturam Deorum; ne homines quidem censetis, nisi imbecilli essent, futuros beneficos & benignos fuisse. Cic. *de Nat. Deor.* lib. 1.

Authority soever are as certainly and necessarily false, as God is true.

21 II. Though these eternal moral Obligations are indeed of themselves incumbent on all rational Beings, even antecedent to the consideration of their being the positive Will and Command of God, yet that which most strongly confirms, and in practice most effectually and Indispensably inforces them upon us, is this; that both from the Perfections of God, and the Nature of Things, and from several other collateral Considerations, it appears, that as God is himself necessarily Just and Good in the exercise of his infinite Power in the Government of the whole World, so he cannot but likewise positively Require that all his rational Creatures should in their Proportion be so too, in the exercise of each of their Powers in their several and respective Spheres. That is; As these eternal moral Obligations are really in perpetual force, merely from their own Nature, and the abstract reason of Things, so also they are moreover the express and unalterable Will, Command, and Law of God to his Creatures, which he cannot but expect should, in obedience to his Supreme Authority, as well as in compliance with the natural reason of Things, be regularly and constantly observed through the whole Creation.

This Proposition is very evident, and has little need of being particularly proved.

22 For 1st. The same Reasons which prove to us that God must of Necessity be himself infinitely Holy, and Just, and Good, manifestly prove, that it must also be his Will, that all his Creatures should be so likewise, according to the Proportions and Capacities of their several Natures. That there are eternal and necessary Differences of Things, Agreements and Disagreements, Proportions and Disproportions, Fitnesses and Unfitnesses of Things, absolutely in their own Nature, has been before largely demonstrated. That, with regard to these fix'd and certain proportions and fitnesses of Things, the Will of God, which can neither be influenced by any external

Power, nor imposed upon by any error or deceit, constantly and necessarily determines itself to choose always what in the whole is Best and Fittest to be done, according to the unalterable Rules of Justice, Equity, Goodness and Truth, has likewise been already proved. That the same considerations Ought also regularly to determine the Wills of all Subordinate rational Beings, to act in constant conformity to the same eternal Rules, has in like manner been shown before. It remains therefore only to prove, that these very same moral Rules, which are thus of themselves really obligatory, as being the necessary result of the unalterable reason and nature of Things, are moreover the positive Will and Command of God to all rational Creatures. And consequently, that the wilful transgression or neglect of them, is as truly an insolent contempt of the Authority of God, as 'tis an absurd confounding of the natural reasons and proportions of Things. Now this also plainly follows from what has been already laid down. For, the same absolute Perfection of the Divine Nature, which (as has been before shown) makes us certain that God must Himself be of Necessity infinitely Holy Just and Good, makes it equally certain, that he cannot possibly approve Iniquity in Others. And the same Beauty, the same Excellency, the same Weight and Importance of the Rules of everlasting Righteousness, with regard to which God is always pleased to make those Rules the Measure of all his Own Actions, prove it impossible but he must likewise will and desire, that all rational Creatures should proportionably make them the Measure of Theirs. Even among Men, there is no earthly Father, but in those things which he esteems his own Excellencies, desires and expects to be imitated by his Children. How much more is it necessary that God, who is infinitely far from being subject to such Passions and Variableness as frail Men are, and who has an infinitely tenderer and heartier Concern for the Happiness of his Creatures, than mortal Men can have for the welfare of their Posterity, must desire to be imitated by his Creatures

in those Perfections, which are the Foundation of his own unchangeable Happiness ?

* * * * *

This Method of deducing the Will of God, from his Attributes, is of all others the best and clearest, the certainest and most universal, that the Light of Nature affords. Yet there are also (as I said) some other collateral Considerations, which help to prove and confirm the same thing ; namely, that all moral Obligations arising from the Nature and Reason of Things, are likewise the positive Will and Command of God. As

23 2. This appears in some measure from the consideration of God's Creation. For God, by Creating things, manifests it to be his Will, that Things should be what they Are. And as Providence wonderfully preserves things in their present State, and all necessary Agents, by constantly and regularly obeying the Laws of their Nature, necessarily employ all their Natural Powers in promoting the same end ; so 'tis evident it cannot but ¹ be the Will of God, that all rational Creatures, whom he has indued with those singular Powers and Faculties, of Understanding, Liberty and Free-Choice, whereby they are exalted in Dignity above the rest of the World, should likewise employ those their extraordinary Faculties in preserving the Order and Harmony of the Creation, and not in introducing Disorder and Confusion therein. The Nature indeed and Relations, the Proportions and Disproportions, the Fitnesses and Unfitnesses of Things, are eternal and in themselves absolutely unalterable ; But this is only upon Supposition that the Things Exist, and that they Exist in such manner as they at present do. Now that things exist in such manner as they do, or that they Exist at all, depends entirely on the Arbitrary Will and good

¹ Mens humana non potest non judicare, esse longè credibilius, quod eadem constantissima voluntas, à qua hominibus datum est esse, pariter mallet ipsos porro esse & valere, hoc est, conservari & felicitate frui, quam illo deturbari de statu, in quo ipsos collocavit. . . . Sic scilicet è voluntate creandi, cognoscitur voluntas conservandi tuendique homines. Ex hac autem innotescit obligatio, qua tenemur ad inserviendum eidem voluntati notae. Cumberl. *de Leg. Nat.* p. 227.

Pleasure of God. At the same time therefore, and by the same means, that God manifests it to be his Will that things should Exist, and that they should Exist in such Manner as they do. (as by Creating them he at first did, and by Preserving them he still continually does, declare it to be his Will they should;) he at the same time evidently declares, that all such moral Obligations, as are the result of the necessary Proportions and Relations of Things, are likewise His positive Will and Command. And consequently, whoever acts contrary to the forementioned Reasons and Proportion of Things, by dis honouring God, by introducing unjust and unequal Dealings among Equals, by destroying his own Being, or by any way corrupting, abusing, and misapplying the Faculties where with God has endued him, (as has been above more largely explained:) is unavoidably guilty of Transgressing at the same time the positive Will and Command of God, which in this manner also is sufficiently discovered and made known to him.

- 524** 3. The same thing may likewise further appear from the following consideration. Whatever tends directly and certainly to promote the Good and Happiness of the Whole, and (as far as is consistent with that chief End) to promote also the Good and Welfare of every particular part of the Creation, must needs be 'agreeable to the Will of God; who, being infinitely Self-sufficient to his own Happiness, could have no other Motive to create things at all, but only that he might communicate to them his Goodness and Happiness, and who consequently cannot but expect and require, that all his Crea-

¹ Dubitari non potest, quin Deus, qui ita naturalem rerum omnium ordinem constituit, ut talia sint actionum humanarum consequentia erga ipsos autores, fecitque ut ordinaria haec consequentia ab ipsis praesciri possint, aut summa cum probabilitate expectari; voluerit haec ab iis considerari, antequam ad agendum se accingerent; atque eos his provisis velut argumentis in Legum sanctione contentis determinari. Cumberl. *de Leg. Nat.* p. 228.

Rector, seu Causa prima rationalis, cuius voluntate res ita disponuntur, ut hominibus satis evidenter indicetur, Actus quosdam illorum esse media necessaria ad finem ipsis necessarium: Vult homines ad hos Actus obligari, vel hos Actus Imperat. *Id.* p. 285.

tures should, according to their several Powers and Faculties, indeavour to promote the same end. Now that the exact Observance of all those moral Obligations, which have before been proved to arise necessarily from the Nature and Relations of Things, (that is to say, Living agreeably to the unalterable Rules of Justice, Righteousness, Equity and Truth;) is the certainest and directest means to promote the Welfare and Happiness, as well of Every Man in particular, both in Body and Mind, as of All Men in general considered with respect to Society, is so very manifest, that even the greatest Enemies of all Religion, who suppose it to be nothing more than a wordly or State-policy, do yet by that very supposition confess thus much concerning it. And indeed This, 'tis not possible for any one to deny. For the practice of moral Virtue does¹ as plainly and undeniably tend to the Natural Good of the World; as any Physical Effect, or Mathematical Truth, is naturally consequent to the Principles on which it depends, and from which it is regularly derived. And without such Practice in some degree, the World can never be happy in any tolerable measure: As is sufficiently evident from Mr. Hobbes's own description of the extreme miserable condition that Men would be in, through the Total Defect of the Practice of all moral Virtue, if they were to live in That State which He stiles (falsely and contrary to all reason, as has been before fully proved,) the State of Nature, but which really is a State of the grossest Abuse and most unnatural corruption and misapplication of Men's natural Faculties, that can be imagined. For since God has plainly so constituted the nature of Men, that they stand continually in need of each other's Help and Assistance, and can never live comfortably without Society and mutual Friendship, and are endued with the Faculties of Reason and Speech, and with other natural Powers, evidently

¹ Pari sane ratione (ac in Arithmeticis operationibus) Doctrinae Moralis veritas fundatur in immutabili cohaerentia inter Felicitatem summam quam Hominum vires assequi valent, & Actus Benevolentiae universalis. Cumberl. de Leg. Nat. p. 23.

fitted to enable them to assist each other in all matters of Life, and mutually to promote universal Love and Happiness ; 'tis manifestly agreeable to nature, and to the Will of God who gave them these Faculties, that they should employ them wholly to this regular and good End. And consequently, 'tis on the contrary evident likewise, that all Abuse and Misapplication of these Faculties, to hurt and destroy, to cheat and defraud, to oppress, insult, and domineer over each other, is directly contrary both to the dictates of Nature and to the Will of God ; Who, necessarily doing always what is Best and Fittest and most for the benefit of the whole Creation, 'tis manifest cannot Will the corruption and destruction of any of his Creatures, any otherwise than as his Preserving their natural Faculties, (which in themselves are good and excellent, but cannot but be capable of being abused and misapplied,) necessarily implies a consequential Permission of such Corruption.

525 And This now, is the great Aggravation of the Sin and Folly of all Immorality, that it is an obstinate setting up the Self-Will of frail, finite, and fallible Creatures, as in Opposition to the eternal Reason of Things, the unprejudiced Judgment of their own Minds, and the general Good and Welfare both of Themselves and their Fellow-creatures, so also in Opposition to the Will of the Supreme Author and Creator of all Things, who gave them their Beings and all the Powers and Faculties they are endued with : In opposition to the Will of the All-wise Perserver and Governour of the Universe, on whose gracious Protection they depend every moment for the preservation and continuance of their Beings : And in Opposition to the Will of their greatest Benefactor, to whose Bounty they wholly owe whatever they enjoy at present, and all the Hopes of what they expect hereafter. This is the highest of all Aggravations ; The utmost Unreasonableness, joyned with obstinate Disobedience, and with the greatest Ingratitude.



JOHN BALGUY

*THE FOUNDATION OF MORAL
GOODNESS*

First edition, 1728. Reprinted here from the fourth edition, included in
‘A Collection of Tracts Moral and Theological,’ 1734.]

BALGUY

The Foundation of Moral Goodness Part I.

526 THE ingenious Author of the *Enquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, has written both his Books with so good a Design, is every where so instructive or entertaining, and discovers upon all Occasions such a Fund of good Nature, as well as good Sense, that I find myself much more inclined to join with the Publick in his just Praise, than offer any Objections against his Performance. And indeed it is not without Pain, that I attempt to point out some Particulars, wherein I apprehend he has erred. I should scarce content myself with the old Excuse of *magis amica Veritas*, if the Mistakes which I think he has committed, did not appear to be of the utmost Consequence ; if they did not lie at the Foundations of Morality, and, like Failures in Ground-work, affect the whole of the building.

* * * * *

527 That the Author of Nature has planted in our Minds benevolent Affections towards others, cannot be denied without contradicting Experience, and falsifying our own Perceptions. Whoever carefully reflects on what passes within his own Breast, may soon be convinced of this Truth, and even feel the

Evidences of it. Nor can it be doubted but these Affections were given us in order to engage, assist and quicken us in a Course of virtuous Actions. They may be looked upon as Auxiliaries, aiding us in our Duty, and supporting and seconding our Reason and Reflection.—But from the Passages I have produced, and others of the like Nature, it plainly appears that our Author does not consider this natural Affection or Instinct, merely as a Help or Incentive to Virtue, but as the true Ground and Foundation of it. He makes Virtue entirely to consist in it, or flow from it.

I must confess myself prejudiced, in some measure, against this Notion, and cannot forbear expressing my Hopes that it will not prove to be just. If the two Instincts of Affection and moral Sense be the only Pillars on which moral Goodness rests, how secure it may stand I know not, but am afraid its Honour, its Dignity, its Beauty will suffer in the Eyes of a great Part of the rational World. I am as unwilling, as our Author can be, that Virtue should be looked upon as wholly artificial. Let it by all means be represented as Natural to us ; let it take its Rise, and flow unalterably from the Nature of Men and Things, and then it will appear not only natural but necessary. I mean necessary in itself, tho' not in respect of its Votaries, as being the Object of their free Choice.—Let it be allowed that Virtue has a natural Right and Authority antecedently to every Instinct, and every Affection, to prescribe Laws to all moral Agents, and let no Bounds be set to its Dominions. More particularly let it reign without a Rival in every human Mind ; but let its Throne be erected in the highest Part of our Nature ; let Truth and right Reason be its immediate supporters ; and let our several Senses, Instincts, Affections and Interests, attend as ministerial and subservient to its sacred Purposes.—But instead of representing this Matter to my Readers' Imaginations, my Business is to appeal to their understandings. And in the

528 First Place, It seems an insuperable Difficulty in our Author's Scheme, that Virtue appears in it to be of an arbitrary and positive Nature, as entirely depending upon Instincts, that might originally have been otherwise, or even contrary to what they now are, and may at any time be altered or inverted, if the Creator pleases. If our Affections constitute the *Honestum* of a Morality, and do not presuppose it, it is natural to ask, What it was that determined the Deity to plant in us these Affections rather than any other? This our Author answers by supposing a certain Disposition essential to the Deity, corresponding to the Affections he has given us. As he also supposes something analogous in the Deity to our moral Sense. By such a Disposition he imagines the Deity would naturally be inclined to give us the kind Affections in Preference to any other. I ask then further, Is such a Disposition a Perfection in the Deity, or is it not? Is it better than a contrary, or than any other Disposition would have been; more worthy of his Nature, and more agreeable to his other Perfections? If it be not, let us not presume to ascribe it to Him. Whatever is in the Deity must be absolutely good, and *sui generis* the very best. On the other Hand, if this Disposition be absolutely good, and really better than any other, then the Question will be, why, and upon what Account it is so? Whatever shall be assigned as the Ground or Reason of that Goodness or Betterness, that we may securely pitch upon, as a proper Foundation for Virtue. If no Reason can be given why the Deity should be benevolently disposed, and yet we suppose him to be so; will it not follow, that he is influenced and acted by a blind unaccountable Impulse?—In Matters perfectly indifferent, it is needless and absurd to have recourse to Mr. Leibnitz's Principle of a sufficient Reason; and where several Means equally conduce to a proposed End, it is certainly indifferent which of them are chosen. But it can never be thought an indifferent Matter

how the Deity is disposed or affected towards his Creatures. Either therefore it must be concluded, that he is determined by the Reason of the Thing, and that this is the Ground of his Benevolence ; or else it must be said, that such a Disposition is necessary in the Deity : If the latter, I ask, In what Sense is it necessary ? A moral Necessity is manifestly nothing to the Purpose ; and if a physical or natural Necessity be meant, that is utterly inconsistent with our Ideas of Goodness. As far as any Acts of Kindness are unchosen and unavoidable, so far they are no Kindness at all, neither infer they any Obligation. But of this more afterwards.

- 529 Our Author in his *Enquiry into the original Idea of Virtue*, has made the following Observation, That our first Ideas of moral Good depend not on laws, may plainly appear from our constant Enquiries into the Justice of Laws themselves; and that not only of human Laws, but also of the Divine. What else can be the Meaning of that universal Opinion, that the Laws of God are just, and holy, and good ? Very right. But I wonder much this Sentiment should not have led the Author to the true original Idea of moral Goodness. For after we have made such Enquiries, do we find Reason to conclude that any Laws are good, merely from their being conformable to the Affections of the Legislator ? And in respect of the divine Laws, what is it that convinces us that they are just, and holy, and good ? Is it their Conformity to a certain Disposition which we suppose in the Deity ? On the contrary, is it not a Perception of the intrinsick Reasonableness of them, and their Tendency to the Publick Good ? If we impartially consult our Ideas, I am persuaded we shall find that moral Goodness no more depends originally on Affections and Dispositions, than it does on Laws ; and that there is something in Actions, absolutely good, antecedent to both.

- 530 2. Another Objection to our Author's Account of moral Good, is, that according thereto, if God had not framed our

Natures with such a Propensity, and given us this benevolent Instinct, we should have been altogether incapable of Virtue ; and notwithstanding Intelligence, Reason, and Liberty, it would have been out of our Power to perform one Action in any Degree morally good. It is evident that this is a direct Consequence of his Notion ; and how a Notion should be true, that labours under such a Consequence as this, I cannot understand. Let it be supposed, that we had been formed destitute of natural Affection ; and more particularly, that we found in our Hearts no kind Instinct towards our Benefactors : Would Gratitude, upon this Supposition, have been absolutely out of our Power ? Might we not nevertheless, by the Help of Reason and Reflection, discover ourselves to be under Obligations, and that we ought to return good Offices or Thanks, according to our Abilities ? If we did not, certainly it would be owing to great Inadvertency and Absence of Thought.—Or, supposing us void of natural Compassion, as well as Benevolence ; might we not possibly be induced to attempt the Relief of a Person in Distress, merely from the Reason of the Thing, and the Rectitude of the Action ? Might we not, by considering the Nature of the Case, and the Circumstances of the Sufferer, perceive some Fitness, some Reasonableness in an Act of Succour ? Might not some such Maxim as that of doing as we would be done unto, offer itself to our Minds, and prevail with us to stretch out a helping Hand upon such an Occasion ? In short, if we made any Use of our Understandings, they would not fail, I think, to discover our Duty in such a Case. Nay, they would prompt us to undertake it, and condemn us if we omitted it. He who now declines such an Office, incurs the Imputation of Inhumanity and Cruelty. And even upon the supposition I am speaking of, who would scruple to pronounce him unreasonable and unjust ? Considering the Frailties and Thoughtlessness of Mankind, it is but too manifest that we stand in need of Instincts and Inclinations

to prompt us to what is good, and stimulate us to our Duty : and good reason there was, why we should not be trusted to ourselves, and the Dictates of our Reason, without them. But still such Virtues would surely have been practicable, tho' they might have been more practised.—Whoever is led by Instinct to the Performance of a good Action, follows the Biass of his Nature. What shall we say then of him who performs the same Action in Obedience to the Reason of his own Mind ? Is it not as natural for a reasonable Creature to act reasonably, as for an affectionate one to act affectionately ? It should be more so ; because tho' both Principles are natural, yet the former is greatly superior, as being of a nobler and sublimer kind. To represent a rational Agent as incapable of performing or approving Actions morally good, without presupposing certain Instincts, seems to me inverting the Frame of our Nature, and transferring the Supremacy from the highest Principle to the lowest.

- 531 3. Another Difficulty in our Author's Scheme is, that it seems to expose him to the Necessity of allowing some Degree of Virtue to Brutes, when in describing a moral Action, he directs and confines our Affections to rational Objects. This Limitation, as I before took notice, appears to have been only casual, for as much as in other Places, he takes in all sensitive Beings. And indeed, there is no Reason to doubt, but Brutes, as they are capable of being treated by us either mercifully or cruelly, may be the Objects either of Virtue or Vice. But the present Question is, whether, according to our Author's Account of moral Good, they are not also in some measure Subjects of Virtue ? For if Virtue be only kind Instincts, or Affections, or Actions consequent upon them, how shall we be able to disprove or deny the Virtue of Brutes ? They pursue the Instincts and Impulses of Nature, more steadily and regularly than Men ; they shew Affection to their respective Kinds, and a strong Degree of Love and

Tenderness towards their Off-spring. And if a Perception, or a Consciousness of the Reasonableness of Actions, be not required to constitute those Actions virtuous, what is there wanting to render many of theirs truly such?—If it be alledged that they know not what they do, and that they are neither capable of intending Good, nor sensible of any Effects of their Love: my Answer is, that they have kind Affections and suitable Actions; which is our Author's Idea of Virtue: Besides, I cannot allow all those Suppositions to pass for Facts, till some Proof appear. In the mean while, it seems to me that these Creatures' Incapacity for Morals, is to be ascribed chiefly, and perhaps wholly, to their utter Ignorance of the Reasons and Relations of Things: from whence it may be justly concluded, that whatever Ideas they may have of natural Good, they can have none of moral.

- 532** 4. Another Argument against our Author's Origin of Virtue, is, that if Virtue consist in kind Affections, then the stronger those Affections, the greater the Virtue. I presume this Consequence is very clear, and yet, if I mistake not, it is both contrary to Fact, and to our Author's own Declarations. He tells us, that in equal Moments of Good produced by two Agents, when one acts from a general Benevolence, the other from a nearer Tye, there is greater Virtue in the Agent who produces greater good from the weaker Attachment.—Thus in co-operating with Gratitude, natural Affection, or Friendship, we evidence less Virtue in any given Moment of Good produced, than in equally important Actions of general Benevolence. From hence I think it follows, that if equal Good were supposed to be produced by an Agent, without any Affection or Attachment at all, his Virtue would still be greater in the same Proportion. How then should that be the true Ground or Principle of Virtue, by the total Absence of which Virtue is mightily increased, and which lessens it when present, in proportion to the Degree of its own Strength and Influence? How to reconcile the fore-

going Passage with the Author's Idea of Virtue, I must confess myself at a loss.—However, the Passage seems to me to contain nothing but what is evidently true. An Act of Kindness done to a Child or a dear Friend, is certainly less Virtue than doing the same to a Stranger. And what can be the Reason of it? Are not the Actions equally reasonable? Or, rather, is not the former more reasonable than the latter? Why then less virtuous? Because the Impulse is so strong as to supersede Reflection, and over-rule, in a great measure, the Freedom of Choice. To be determined to the doing a good Action merely by the Reason and Right of the Thing, is genuine Goodness; this is the purest and most perfect Virtue of which any Agent is capable. As far as we are influenced by Instincts and Affections, so much is to be discounted in the Estimate of our Beneficence; as I shall soon have further Occasion to observe. On the other hand, the stronger the Instinct, the more vicious is the Violation of it, as our Author takes notice. A barbarous Action committed against a Child or a Friend, is vastly more criminal than against a Stranger; as in this Case a Man breaks through much stronger Ties and Obligations, and shamefully counter-acts both Reason and Affection in their utmost Force.

533 But to proceed; Let us hear what Reason our Author gives for those Actions appearing less amiable, which flow from the nearer Attachments of Nature. He tells us, the Reason is plainly this, These strong Instincts are by Nature limited to small Numbers of Mankind.—As I do not apprehend this to be the right Reason, so neither do I think it affords any Solution of the forementioned Difficulty; for however a general Affection may be preferable to a limited and partial one, yet certainly, according to our Author's Scheme, the Degree of an Agent's Virtue must depend upon the Strength of his Affections, as well as the Extent and Diffusiveness of them. If Virtue consists only in Affection and the Effects it produces, this Consequence is unavoidable.—Supposing then that Men

had the same natural Affection for their whole Species, that they have now for their Off-spring, I ask, Whether would this increase or diminish the Virtue and Merit of their good Offices? If it be said, that it would diminish the Virtue of them, how is that to be reconciled with our Author's Opinion, who derives all Virtue from Affection, and makes it entirely consist in it? If it be said that it would increase it, how is that consistent either with the fore-cited Passages, or the Truth of the Case? Not with those Passages, because Actions are there represented as less virtuous, when flowing from near Attachments or strong Affections: Not with the Truth of the Case, because upon this Supposition, universal Kindness would be almost unavoidable, while little or no room was left for the Influence of Reason.—And this I take to be the true Cause why parental Kindness is less meritorious and less virtuous than other Species of Benevolence; for in this Case, the Instincts and Impulses of Nature are generally so strong as to lay a kind of a Constraint upon Parents, and engage them almost irresistably in a Series of good Offices. Their Virtue therefore is diminished in proportion to the Strength of this natural Bias, and the Weight that is laid upon their Wills; and so it would be in respect of general Benevolence, upon the foregoing Supposition. On the contrary; supposing the *στοργή*, or natural Affection suspended, or taken off, the Virtue of those Parents who nevertheless discharged their Duty, would be exceedingly increased.—However, we cannot but acknowledge and admire the Wisdom and Goodness of the Creator, in not trusting to the Reflection of frail Man for the Performance of so necessary a Duty. It is much better that the Balance of natural Affection be too strong, as we commonly find it is, than that helpless Infants should be committed to the Care of unaffectionate Parents.

534 But to return; In order to be satisfied of the Truth of the foregoing Observation, let us imagine the Head of some numerous Family, large enough for a little Colony, carrying

them away with him into some remote and desolate Island, and there forming a petty Principality ; his Care in enacting good Laws, and executing them faithfully and prudently, his indefatigable Endeavours to promote the Welfare of his Descendants, and his governing them with all the Mildness, Gentleness and Clemency, that were consistent with an orderly Administration, would doubtless be laudable and virtuous.— But let us imagine another Legislator, presiding over an equal Number of People, where there was no such near Attachments of Nature, no Tye of Consanguinity, and yet ruling with equal Care, Prudence, Gentleness and Moderation ; whether of these Characters would appear more amiable and deserving ? Whether should we more approve and admire ? In the former Case, a great Share of the Merit would be placed to the Account of natural Affection, commonly so called. In the latter, excepting the weaker Attachment of common Humanity, we discover nothing but pure Virtue, and a Sense of Honour and Duty ; for as to external Motives, I suppose them equal in both Cases.—And if instead of small Governments, large and populous Kingdoms could have been supposed thus circumstantiated, the different Merit of the Legislators would still have appeared in the same Light. From whence we may justly conclude, that the true Reason why parental or any other Benevolence, that flows from the near Attachments of Nature, appear less amiable and virtuous, is not its being limited to small Numbers of Mankind, as our Author has represented it. What appears to me the just and right Way of accounting for it has been already observed, and need not here be repeated.

535 5. Lastly, It may deserve to be considered (though I have touched upon it already) how much Virtue is depreciated and dishonoured by so ignoble an Original. In our Author's Scheme it is resolved ultimately into mere Instinct, and made to consist in it ; and even that universal Approbation which it meets with from intelligent Creatures, is ascribed to a certain

Sense, and made to depend wholly on it. Now if Virtue and the Approbation of Virtue, be merely instinctive, we must certainly think less highly and less honourably of it, than we should do if we looked upon it as rational; for I suppose it will readily be allowed, that Reason is the nobler Principle: It is therefore to be wished that it may be found to have the first and chief Place in the original Idea of Virtue, and the Exclusion of it must, I think, be a Disparagement to both— Some will not allow, our Author tells us¹, any Merit in Actions flowing from kind Instincts, the Operation of which, they say, is not voluntary but necessary. Has our Author any where denied their operating in this Manner? Or has he attempted to shew that they may produce meritorious Actions, notwithstanding such a Manner of Operation? I cannot find that he has done either; and indeed it seems utterly impossible to reconcile Virtue with any kind of Necessity. As far as any Actions spring from a necessary Principle, so far they must be, in a moral Sense, worthless. If it be said that Instincts do not force the Mind, but only incline it; I answer, that as much Room as they leave for the Use of Liberty and the Exercise of Reason, so much Room they leave for Virtue; but then this Virtue consists in a rational Determination, and 536 not in a blind Pursuit of the Instinct. What he objects to this will be considered in its proper Place; in the mean time, to his Query concerning the Meaning of the Words Merit or Praiseworthiness; I answer, that they denote the Quality in Actions which not only gains the Approbation of the Observer, but which also deserves or is worthy of it. Approbation does not constitute Merit, but is produced by it; is not the Cause of it, but the Effect. An Agent might be meritorious, though it were in the Power of all other Beings to with-hold their Approbation, he might deserve their Praise, tho' we suppose him at the same Time under an universal Censure. Notwithstanding all that our Author has alledged in behalf of Instincts, I think

¹ Illustrat. Sect. 5.

it appears, even from what has been already said, that they are so far from constituting Virtue or moral Goodness, that, other Things being equal, we always account those Actions most virtuous which have the least Dependance upon Instincts ; and tho' in some Sense we approve of those Actions which flow from Instincts, yet there are others which we approve much more, as flowing from a superior Principle, and meriting our Approbation in themselves, and upon their own account.

537 I shall now proceed to consider the other of the two Instincts which our Author has offered for the Support of Morality, viz. The moral Sense, the Object of which seems to me not sufficiently specified.—Virtue, or moral Goodness, may be considered either under the Notion of *Pulchrum* or *Honestum*. As to the *Pulchrum* or Beauty of Virtue, it seems to me somewhat doubtful and difficult to determine, whether the Understanding alone be sufficient for the Perception of it, or whether it be not necessary to suppose some distinct Power superadded for that Purpose. It should seem indeed, as an ingenious Writer has observed¹, that our Faculty of Understanding is of itself sufficient for such a Perception, that the Beauty of Virtue inseparably and necessarily adheres to the Ideas themselves, which whenever presented to the Mind, appear invariably the same, always amiable and always beautiful. But when I consider, what perhaps is the Case in fact, that Perceptions of the *Pulchrum* and of the *Honestum*, seem not equally universal, or if universal, yet in very different Degrees ; that while every rational Creature clearly and uniformly perceives, in all ordinary Cases, what is fit, and just, and right ; many Men have little or no Perception of that Beauty in Actions, with which others are wonderfully charmed : And when I further consider, that some Actions appear to all Men more beautiful than others, tho' equally right and fit ; as in the Case of Social and Self-Duties ; I find myself obliged

¹ Letter in the *London-Journal*, Numb. 450.

to suspend, and to wait for further Evidence¹.—Especially in respect of the Pleasure resulting from such Perceptions. For however Ideas, beautiful in themselves, may be seen by the Understanding, yet Pleasure is not seen, but felt; and therefore seems to be an Object of some other Faculty than that which we are used to consider as merely visive. If the purest Pleasures be Sensations, of some kind or other; the Mind in receiving them, must be looked upon, not as intelligent, but sensible. And indeed, Sensibility seems to be as distinct from the Understanding, as the Understanding is from the Will. We should not therefore confound them in our Conceptions.

538 But this is a Speculation somewhat Foreign to my present Purpose. It was not the Beauty of Virtue, or the Pleasure arising from the Perception of it, that I proposed to enquire into. My Intention was only to consider the Nature, and search for the Origin of Moral Rectitude. For the Perception of this, I presume it will appear, that the Faculty of Understanding is altogether sufficient, without the Intervention of our Author's Moral Sense. But before I enter into this Matter, it may be proper to consider how improbable it is, that our Perceptions of Right and Wrong, and the Approbation or Disapprobation consequent thereupon, should depend on such a Sense, or Instinct, as he has advanced for that purpose. And here I shall only need to observe, that this Opinion is liable to the very same Objections, and labours under the same Difficulties with the former.—Thus, as deriving Virtue merely from natural Affection, implies it to be of an arbitrary and

¹ Since the first Publication of these Papers, I have been convinced, that all Beauty, whether Moral or Natural, is to be reckoned and reputed as a Species of Absolute Truth; as resulting from, or consisting in, the necessary Relations and unchangeable Congruities of Ideas: and, by Consequence, that in order to the Perception of Beauty, no other Power need to be supposed, than what is merely intellectual. And as to the Diversity of Perceptions above mentioned, the natural or accidental Differences of Men's Understandings seem now to me sufficient to account for it.

changeable Nature ; our judging and approving of it by a Moral Sense implies the same : Forasmuch as this Sense, as well as that Affection, might possibly have been quite contrary to what it is at present; or may be altered at any Time hereafter. Accordingly our Author grants, There is nothing in this surpassing the Natural Power of the Deity. But I humbly apprehend he is mistaken ; and that it is no more in the Power of the Deity to make rational Beings approve of Ingratitude, Perfidiousness, &c. than it is in his Power to make them conclude, that a Part of any thing is equal to the Whole.

—In like manner, as according to our Author's Scheme, we should have been utterly incapable of Virtue without Natural Affection ; so without a Moral Sense, we could never have approved of it ; nor ever have had any Idea at all of Moral Goodness ; so that in this respect, our Understandings would have been entirely useless. As if intelligent Creatures could not, as such, perceive the most obvious Relations, and judge of a plain Action, as well as a plain Truth !—Again, as it seems to follow from our Author's Idea of Virtue, that Brutes may be in some degree capable of practising it ; so upon the same Supposition of a moral Sense, why may they not, in some measure, approve of such a Practice ? It is not to be doubted but they are sensible of Pleasure, in the Exercise of their natural Affections. Supposing them then endued with a Moral Sense, or something corresponding thereto, why might they not see with Complacency others of their own Species exercising and exerting the same Affections ? And indeed, if the Reasons and Relations of Things are out of the Question, and this moral Sense means no more than a natural Determination to receive agreeable or disagreeable Ideas of certain Actions ; I think it will be very difficult to prove Brutes
539 incapable of such a Sense.—Thus again, as I think it follows from our Author's Notion, that the stronger Men's Affections are, the greater must be their Virtue ; so it may be concluded, that the stronger and quicker their moral Sense is, the higher

must their Approbation of virtuous Actions rise. Let the Perceptions of Beauty, and the Pleasure which attends them, be supposed as different and various as the Author thinks fit. But to make the Rectitude of moral Actions dependant upon Instinct, and in proportion to the Warmth and Strength of the moral Sense, rise and fall like Spirits in a Thermometer, is depreciating the most sacred Thing in the World, and almost exposing it to Ridicule. I believe no Man living is further from such an intention than our Author: But I am obliged to examine his Opinion as if it was not his. If what I have now observed be not a real Consequence from it, I must be answerable for the Mistake: But if it be, as I presume it is, it seems heavy enough to sink any Opinion in the World. It might as well be said, that eternal and necessary Truths may be altered and diversified, encreased or lessened by the Difference of Men's Understandings; as that Virtue or Moral Rectitude should be capable of such a Variation. It can receive no Change, no Alteration any way, much less in con-

540 sequence of a Sense or an Instinct.—Lastly, as I took notice how Virtue was dishonoured by so ignoble an Original as that of Instinct, so the same Observation may be applied to the Notion of a moral Sense, with this Addition, that at the same time that it depreciates Virtue, it also debases the Faculty of Reason: The Former it does by ascribing to a blind Impulse that Approbation which Virtue eternally claims in its own Right; the Latter by representing our Understandings as incapable, and as insufficient of themselves, to judge and approve of it. And what can be more disparaging to Reason, than to deny it a Power of distinguishing, in the most ordinary Cases, between Right and Wrong, Good and Evil! Suppose a Man deprived of what our Author calls the moral Sense; and according to his Hypothesis, whatever Reason and Philosophy the Man may be possessed of, the Characters of Antonius and Caligula, of Socrates and Apicius, shall appear to him in the same Light, and their Conduct equally praiseworthy, or rather

equally indifferent : Than which I cannot easily imagine a more shocking Absurdity.

541 Thus I think it appears that our Author's Opinions concerning the two Instincts of Affection and moral Sense, stand equally exposed to the same Objections. From whence we may observe how nicely they are matched, and how exactly they tally to each other.—Let us then seek out for some other Original of our Ideas, and enquire whether Virtue or moral Goodness do not stand on a surer and nobler Foundation. Perhaps we may find it independent of all Instincts, necessarily fixed, and immovably rooted in the Nature of Things. And perhaps also we may find Reason or Intelligence a proper Faculty to perceive and judge of it, without the Assistance of any adventitious Power ; only let it be remembred, that it is not the Beauty or Pleasure, but only the Rectitude of moral Actions that we are enquiring after.

542 Our Author observes, as I before took notice, that other Ways of speaking have been introduced, which seem to signify something different from the two opposite Opinions before mentioned. And he concludes, that to render these intelligible, the moral Sense must be presupposed. These Ways of speaking, as he calls them¹, are, That Morality of Actions consists in Conformity to Reason, and Deformity from it. That Virtue is acting according to the absolute Fitness of Things, or agreeably to the Natures and Relations of Things. That there are eternal and immutable Differences of Things, absolutely and antecedently ; that there are also eternal and unalterable Relations in the Natures of the Things themselves ; from which arise Agreements and Disagreements, Congruities and Incongruities, Fitness and Unfitness of the Application of Circumstances to the Qualifications of Persons, &c. And here the Author refers us to that excellent, that inestimable Book, Dr. S. Clarke's *Boyle's Lectures* ; from which, how it happened that a Person of his Discernment and Penetration

¹ Illustrat. pp. 207, 211.

rose dissatisfied, in relation to the Points before us, I am not able to imagine, unless I may have leave to attribute it to too close an Attachment to the celebrated Author of the *Characteristicks*.

To these Ways of speaking might be added some others; as, that Virtue consists in the Conformity of our Wills to our Understandings. That it is a rational Endeavour of producing Happiness in capable Subjects. But since both these and the former appear to me coincident, and to center in the same Idea, I shall not examine them severally, but content myself with laying down the Notion contained in them in the following Definitions and Explications. And this Method I therefore pitch upon, because our Author has complained of the Darkness or Ambiguity of several of the Terms.

543 1. Virtue, or moral Goodness, is the Conformity of our moral Actions to the Reasons of Things. Vice the contrary.

544 2. Moral Actions are such as are knowingly directed toward some Object intelligent or sensible.—I do not add their springing from free Choice; because without this they could not really be Actions.—To treat or use an insensible Object conformably to Reason, or according to what it is, tho' it may be a right Action, yet is indifferent in respect of Morality; which only concerns our Behaviour to such Beings as are, at least, sensible. But as I exclude not here, Beings merely sensible, so neither do I exclude the Agent himself. To promote his own real Welfare, in subordination to that of the Publick, is in its Kind true Virtue.

545 3. The Conformity of such Actions to Reason, or the Rectitude of them, is their Agreeableness to the Nature and Circumstances of the Agents and the Objects.—A social Action is then right, when it is suitable to the Nature and Relations of the Persons concerned. Thus a Person obliged acts rightly and reasonably, when his Actions are answerable to the Relation of Gratitude between him and his Benefactor.

546 4. Relations between Things or Persons, are their comparative States or Modes of Existence, necessarily arising from their different Natures or Circumstances.—Whether Relations be Qualities inherent in external Natures, or not ; or however they may be defined, or conceived, they are certainly real, unalterable, and eternal. That is, supposing those Natures always continuing to be what they are, the Relations interceding between them are invariable. However, the Relations between Ideas are strictly necessary and unchangeable ; the Ideas themselves being so in the divine Understanding.

547 5. Obligation may be considered as either external or internal. Of external, which arises from just Authority, I have no Occasion to speak—Internal Obligation is a State of the Mind into which it is brought by the Perception of a plain Reason for acting, or forbearing to act, arising from the Nature, Circumstances, or Relations of Persons or Things —The Internal Reasons of Things are the supreme Law¹, inducing the strongest Obligation, and affecting² all intelligent Beings. Tho' we are certainly obliged to do whatever appears to be the Will of God, merely because it is his Will, and in consequence of that Right which He has to prescribe Laws to us ; yet our Obligation to act conformably to Reason is even superior to this, because the Divine Will itself is certainly subject to the original Law or Rule of Action.—To suppose reasonable Beings unconcerned with the Reasons of Things, is to suppose them reasonable and unreasonable at the same time. The Reasons of Things are to Men, in respect of Practice, what Evidence is in Speculation. Assent in one Case, and Approbation in the other, are equally and irresistibly gained ; only there is this Difference, that the Will has Power to rebel, and the Understanding has not. But when-

¹ Πᾶν τὸ βέλτιστον φαινόμενον ἔστω σοι νόμος ἀπαράβατος. Epict. cap. 75.

'Lex nihil est aliud nisi recta—ratio.' Cic. *Phil. II.*

² 'Aeternum quiddam quod universum mundum regeret imperandi prohibendique sapientia.' Cic. *de Leg.* lib. 2.

ever the Will does rebel, the immediate Consequence is an odious Perception of Wrong, and a Consciousness of Guilt, which may be looked upon as natural Sanctions of the Law of Nature.

- 548** 6. Reason, or Intelligence, is a Faculty enabling us to perceive, either immediately or mediately, the Agreement or Disagreement of Ideas, whether natural or moral.—This last Cause, otherwise superfluous, is inserted upon our Author's Account; who seems to exclude moral Ideas, and to consider them as Objects of another Faculty. And indeed, if he had thought our Understandings capable of moral Perceptions, he would have had no Occasion for introducing his moral Sense, except in Relation to the $\tau\delta\ \kappa\lambda\delta\nu$, concerning which I have already acknowledged myself undetermined. But it is visible, that he ascribes our Perceptions of the Rectitude of virtuous Actions to this moral Sense, or rather makes that Rectitude entirely consist in their Correspondence with it. Whereas if there be a real Rectitude in such Actions, I cannot doubt but our Understandings are capable of perceiving it. We have confessedly Ideas of Actions and Agents, and find a manifest Difference among them. We find likewise that some Actions are agreeable, others disagreeable, to the Nature and Circumstances of the Agent and the Object, and the Relations interceding between them. Thus, for Instance, we find an Agreement between the Gratitude of *A* and the Kindness of *B*; and a Disagreement between the Ingratitude of *C* and the Bounty of *D*. These Agreements and Disagreements are visible to every intelligent Observer, who attends to the
- 549** several Ideas. The Question then is, Whether we perceive them by our Understanding, or by what our Author calls a moral Sense? And might it not as well be asked, How it is that we perceive the Agreement between the three Angles of a Triangle, and two Right ones? Will our Author say, that we perceive this by an Intellectual Sense superadded to our Understanding? I believe he will not. Why then does he

ascribe the other Perceptions to a moral one? If¹ the Agreement or Disagreement of one Sort of Ideas be proper Objects of our Understandings, why not those of another? Especially, since in many Cases, they are perceived with equal Clearness and Evidence. Let therefore our intelligent Faculty either be pronounced insufficient in both Cases, or in neither. Nay, since moral Perceptions are more useful and important than any other, there is peculiar Reason to conclude, that they belong to our supreme Faculty. It is not to be imagined, that the wise Author of Nature would frame our Minds in such a Manner, as to allot them only Instincts for the Purposes of Morality and Virtue, and at the same time grant them Reason and Intelligence for inferior Uses. This seems to me neither consistent with the Dignity of Virtue, nor the Supremacy of our rational Faculty.

550 7. Truth, objectively considered, is either of Words, Ideas, or Things. By which last I mean external Natures. Verbal Truth, or the Truth of Propositions, is their Conformity to one or both of the other two. Ideal Truth is the Agreement or Disagreement of Ideas, Truth of Things is the relative Nature of Things themselves, or the agreement or Disagreement of one Thing with another.—That Ideas correspond or differ, agree or disagree with each other, will readily be allowed, whether such Agreements or Disagreements be formed into Propositions or no. The Differences among them constitute various Relations, which are fixed and certain, independently of our Observation.—In like manner external Natures, in virtue of their essential or circumstantial Differences, abound in real Relations to one another, independently of Propositions, and in some sense, even of Ideas. The Things indeed themselves could never have existed without a Mind, and antecedent Ideas. But when they are once brought into Existence, and

¹ ‘Nam ut vera & falsa sua sponte, non aliena, judicantur; sic constans & perpetua ratio vitæ, quæ est virtus—sua natura probatur.’ Cic. *de Leg.* lib. i.

constituted in such or such a Manner, those Agreements or Disagreements, wherein Truth consists, flow necessarily from their respective Constitutions ; and by Consequence, neither depend on the Perceptions of intelligent Beings, nor on the Will of the Creator himself. A cylindrical Body would be bigger than a conical one, of the same Base and Height, and spherical Particles fitter for Motion than angular, whether any Beings perceived it, or no.—There are also the same real Agreements and Disagreements between Actions, Agents, and Objects, as any other Things. Some Actions are very different from and even contrary to others. There is likewise a wide Difference between the Nature of rational Creatures, and that of Brutes ; and between the Nature of Brutes, and that of inanimate Things. They require therefore respectively a suitable Treatment. To treat Men in the same Way we treat Brutes, and to treat Brutes in the same Way we do Stocks and Stones, is manifestly as disagreeable and dissonant to the Natures of Things, as it would be to attempt the forming of an Angle with two parallel Lines. I would not call such a Conduct acting a Lye, because that is confounding objective and subjective Truth, and introducing needless Perplexities. I would not call it a Contradiction to some true Proposition, because that neither comes up to the Case, nor is a Way of speaking strictly proper ; but I would call it a Counter-
551 action to the Truth, or real Natures of Things.—From hence it appears, how far, and with what Propriety a morally good Action may be said to be conformable to Truth, or to consist in such a Conformity. If by Truth be meant the Truth of Things, then I think it may properly be said, that the moral Goodness of an Action consists in a Conformity thereto. It may therefore be called either a true or a right Action ; tho' for Distinction sake, and the avoiding of Ambiguity and Confusion, I should constantly prefer the latter. However, since this Truth of Things is, in Morals, the Standard and Measure of true Propositions, which are no otherwise true, than as they

agree with it ; it is evidently more proper to represent moral Goodness as founded on the former, rather than the latter.—

552 If it be asked, why it is not as proper to found it on Ideal Truth, as the Truth of Things ? I answer, that in respect of divine Ideas it is the very same, all Things being created and framed according to those Models. But though external Natures are only Copies of the divine Ideas, yet in respect of ours, they are Originals, since our Ideas are all taken from them, as far as Morality is concerned. It is true, indeed, in Mathematicks our Ideas themselves are the Standards, Nature supplying no Figures so exact as that Science requires : But in Morals our Ideas are only Representations of Natures and Relations actually existing. As far as our Ideas are conformable thereto, so far they are just ; but we cannot in all Instances be absolutely secure that they are so. In some nicer Cases we may misapprehend the States and Circumstances of moral Agents, and the Relations between them. In Strictness therefore, the Foundations of Morality must be laid either in the Truth or Nature of Things themselves, or in the divine Ideas, which comes to the same Thing.

553 Nevertheless, in ordinary Cases, we may securely rely on our own Perceptions, the Objects of which, even in Morals, are often self-evident Truths, and almost always resolvable into such. The Reasons of Things, and the Relations between moral Agents, seldom fail of appearing to us in a clear Light ; and that, as I before observed, without the Help of an additional Faculty. For the most part we perceive and understand what is right and what is wrong in Actions, as plainly and distinctly as we understand what is true, and what is false, in Propositions : and both consist in the Relations discoverable between our Ideas ; so that we have all the Grounds that can be, to conclude them equally Objects of Intelligence.—To give Pain, without Cause, to a sensible Creature, is an Action self-evidently wrong, as being directly repugnant to the Nature of the Object, and the Circumstances of the Agent : The

Iniquity of it is as manifest to every Understanding, as the Difference between a curve and a Straight-Line. We are certainly informed by our Senses, that Pain is a natural Evil ; here is therefore a plain and perpetual Reason against the Infliction of it, when no stronger intervenes to make it requisite.—In like manner we certainly know that Pleasure is a natural Good ; here is therefore a plain and perpetual Reason for the Production of it, whenever we have it in our Power, and are not hindered by a stronger.—Are then these Things, strictly speaking, unintelligible ? Is it entirely owing to one Instinct, that we are guided by such Rules, and to another that we approve of them ? Upon the whole, if we really have such a Faculty as Understanding, and its proper Object be Truth, we need not doubt but it is capable of discerning moral Rectitude, since this is entirely founded upon Truth, and ultimately consists in an Agreement with it.

554 If it be objected to this Account of Virtue, that so small a Regard is had in it to Affections and Temper ; my Answer is, that tho' I grant the Reality of such Affections, and the Usefulness of them, in respect of human Nature, yet I can by no means look upon them as essential to Virtue ; nor can I think that any Instinct has a Place in its Constitution. To speak properly, Reason was not given us to regulate natural Affection, but natural Affection was given us to reinforce Reason, and make it more prevalent. The inferior Principle must be intended as subservient to the superior, and not *vice versa*. Let Affection be allowed, if you will, antecedent in Order of Time ; I neither know nor enquire how far in point of Use and Exercise it may get the start of Reason and Reflection : This will neither give it Pre-eminence, nor make it equal in Dignity ; Sense and Memory are prior to the Use of Judgment, but still are inferior Principles.—A benevolent Instinct is a very proper Introduction to Virtue ; it may lead us, as it were, by the Hand, till we arrive at a Conduct truly virtuous, and that is founded on rational Principles ; and even

afterwards it may continue to quicken us in our Pursuits. But yet, as far as our Wills are determined, either by Instinct, or any thing else besides Reason, so far, I think, we can have no Pretension to Merit or Moral Goodness. However, as Instinct has a Tendency to moral Good, so it actually produces a great Share of natural Good. Doubtless, a great Proportion of the Benefits and good Offices that are done in the World, are to be ascribed to natural Affection, either wholly or chiefly. And tho' this be no Proof of the Prevalence of true Virtue among Mankind, but rather an Argument of the contrary, yet most certainly it is a signal Instance of the Wisdom and Goodness of the Creator, in providing such a wonderful Supply both for our natural Wants and our moral Defects. But other and larger Concessions are to be made in behalf of Affection, tho' of a different Kind from that of Instinct.

555 It seems to me an useful and material Distinction, to consider the Affection of Benevolence, either as instinctive, or as rational, as natural, or as acquired ; acquired, I mean, by Reason, Reflection, and a consequent Practice. If we attend to the Reasons on which moral Goodness is founded, we discover its Rectitude and intrinsick Fitness. Why then may not this very Perception produce benevolent Affection, or a real Desire of Publick Good ? and this Desire continue prompting Men to generous Pursuits, and be strengthened by suitable Practice ? Is not such a rational Benevolence more agreeable to rational Natures, and more meritorious than a blind Instinct that we have in common with inferior Creatures, and which operates, as it were, mechanically, both on their Minds and ours ? I have already granted, that we could not, without great Inconvenience, have wanted such an Impulse, and that great and good Effects are produced by it. I have also granted, that a natural Bias was proper to draw us into the right Path, and to prevent our being led astray, during the Infancy of our Reason ; but still I must maintain,

that this Impulse or Bias is not Virtue ; nor can any thing be Virtue, but what consists in a rational Determination of the Mind. As our Fellow-Creatures are a proper Object of a natural Affection, so are they a proper Object of a rational one ; and as that is good and useful, this is laudable and truly virtuous.—It cannot, I think, be denied, but that calm, universal Benevolence, in Praise and Preference of which our Author often speaks, is more owing to Reason and Reflection than natural Instinct, where-ever it appears. And supposing us naturally void of publick Affection, I doubt not but Reason and Reflection would raise such a Benevolence as this, in considerate Minds.—I shall only add, that tho' an instinctive and a rational Benevolence may make the same amiable Appearance in the Eyes of Men, who cannot indeed distinguish them in any Minds but their own ; yet in the Sight of the Deity, I doubt not but the latter is much more acceptable and meritorious.

556 Again, if Virtue must be derived from some Affection, why not that Affection, of which Reason itself is the Object ? And here again, I mean no Instinctive Determination of the Mind. As I spoke before of a rational Benevolence, of which Mankind is the Object ; so here I speak of a rational Love of Complacency, the Object of which is Reason or moral Goodness itself. Whatever is good, absolutely good, will produce the Affection either of Complacency or Desire, in such Beings as are capable and willing to attend to its Excellence. Virtue then, or moral Rectitude, being good in this Sense, will not fail to recommend itself to all rational Minds that duly consider it. The Congruity between the Object and the Faculty is not arbitrary, as in other Cases, but necessary and unchangeable.—As to the Beauty of Virtue, that is a further Charm, as the Pleasure attending the Perception of it is an additional Recommendation. Whether these, especially the latter of them, belong not so some other Faculty than that of Intelligence, I leave to be enquired and determined by others :

What I contend for at present, is, that without regarding, or thinking of the Pleasure it may yield, we esteem Virtue or moral Rectitude upon its own Account ; that our Affection for it, is not an instinctive Determination, but raised and produced in the Mind by the intrinsiek Worth and Goodness of the Object. Most other Objects are therefore good, because they are adapted to our Faculties, or our Faculties to them. But Truth and Virtue are good in themselves, and necessarily appear so to all Beings capable of perceiving them : Their Excellence is not borrowed or adventitious, but inherent and essential : They reflect not a foreign Light, but shine like the Sun, with their own proper Rays and native Lustre.

557 Our Author, in his *Nature and Conduct of the Passions*, makes mention of a rational Desire ; and takes notice of such Affections as seem to arise necessarily from a rational Apprehension of Good or Evil. I cannot avoid thinking, that he would have done more Justice both to Virtue and Human Nature, if he had laid more Stress upon such Affections as these, and less upon Instincts. He grants, (speaking of Virtue) that the lovely Form never fails to raise Desire, as soon as it appears. But this Desire, according to his Notion, is only an instinctive Affection, suited and accommodated to its Object. And even this Object, Virtue itself, which he calls a lovely Form, appears, I think, in his Representation, far less lovely than it really is. For he has represented this Loveliness, not as absolute and necessarily inherent, but as factitious and communicated. According to him, suppose but the moral Sense inverted, and then Vice, as we now call it, becomes the lovely Form. But surely this is a Misrepresentation of Virtue, the Excellence of which is not precarious nor derived, but essential, absolute, and independant.

558 But to return ; the Rational Affections before mentioned, springing from so noble a Principle, and operating jointly upon the Mind, along with natural Propensity, must needs constitute an excellent disposition. The best and most desirable

Temper in the World, must, I think, be that which consists in a Rational universal Benevolence, and an habitual Complacency in Virtue. Whether such Affections be considered as grafted upon natural Benevolence, or as distinct Principles co-operating with it; I venture to affirm, that the more any Temper is influenced by Reason and Reflexion, the better and nobler Effects it will produce, and render the Possessor more amiable and more deserving.

559 But the great Difficulty in our Author's Apprehension, is yet behind : He wants to be informed what are the Motives, Inducements, or exciting Reasons for the Choice of Virtue, and what the justifying Reasons of our Approbation of it. He seems to think these Questions are not to be answered upon the Scheme I am defending : Let us then try whether this Difficulty be not surmountable without the Help of those Instincts which he has introduced for that Purpose.—What is the Reason exciting a Man to the Choice of a virtuous Action ? I answer, his very Approbation of it is itself a sufficient Reason, where-ever it is not over-ruled by another more powerful. What can be more just, what more natural, than chusing of a thing that we approve, and even chusing it for that very Reason ?—But why then do we approve ? or what justifies our Approbation of it ? I answer in one Word, Necessity. The same Necessity which compels Men to assent to what is true, forces them to approve what is right and fit. And I cannot but wonder, that our Author should demand a Reason for the one more than for the other. In both Cases the Mind necessarily acquiesces, without regarding or considering the Effects or Tendencies of either.

560 If it be needful to enlarge upon this Matter, or take a further View of it, we need only call to mind what was before observed, viz. That Virtue being intrinsically worthy and excellent, fails not to produce a real Affection for itself, in all Minds that attentively consider it ; it not only makes itself approved, but admired ; not only admired, but loved, by

those that contemplate it in a proper Manner: And the better any one is acquainted with it by Contemplation and Practice, the more amiable it becomes, and the higher his Affection rises. Is it then to be wondered, that rational Beings should chuse what they love, or, in other Words, embrace an Object of their Affections? Much less is it to be wondered in the present Case, where the peculiar Dignity and Excellence of the Object is confessed.—Our Author grants, that all Affections justify themselves: What can this mean, but that they justify our Approbation and Choice of their respective Objects? If therefore it be true that we have, or may have, such an Affection for Virtue, or moral Goodness, as I have been speaking of, we shall need to seek no further, either for Excitements to Election, or Grounds of Approbation. Whether this Affection be looked upon as natural or adventitious, it will abundantly justify itself, and all the Regards that may be shewn for its Object.

561 But our Author tells us, that in every calm rational Action, some End is desired or intended. And accordingly, he expects to hear, what is the End which a Man proposes in the Choice of Virtue, upon the present Scheme. He affirms that under Benevolence, Self-love, and their Opposites, all Affections are included; and concludes from thence, that there can be no exciting Reason but what arises from some or other of them.—Before I examine this Objection, I desire to know whether that Esteem, Admiration, Complacency which Virtue produces, be no Affection? and, whatever they may be called, whether they may not excite to Election? Is Virtue no otherwise good or amiable, than as it conduces to publick or private Advantage? Is there no absolute Goodness in it? Are all its Perfections relative and instrumental? Have we no other Idea of the *Honestum* and the *Pulchrum* but this? Is the lovely Form to be considered only as a kind of Cornucopia?

562 But to return: Our Author's Question amounts plainly

to this: What does a reasonable Creature propose in acting reasonably? Or what is it that induces his Will to take Counsel of his Understanding? As if this were not the very Essence of a rational Action! The Question therefore might as well have been put thus: What is it that induces a Man to be a rational Agent, when he has it in his Power to be otherwise? Besides the internal Reasons which I am speaking of, there are indeed likewise external Reasons, if Considerations of Interest may properly be called so. Call them what we will, they must, and will be regarded by such Creatures as Men. But clamorous and importunate as they are, they leave us at liberty, in most Cases, to attend to those internal Reasons which I have been considering. The still Voice of Conscience may generally be heard amidst all the Bustle and

563 Tumult of our Appetites and Passions.—But to come to the Point, if by the End which our Author enquires after, he means nothing but some Advantage or natural Good; my Answer is, that we may chuse reasonable or virtuous Actions, without Intention or View of any such End. But if I may be allowed to take the Word in another Signification, then I answer as follows.—The End of rational Actions and rational Agents, considered as such, is Reason or moral Good. As this is the proper Object of our moral Capacity, and the Affection corresponding thereto, it may properly be said to be our End as moral Agents. This Affection, like others, reaches out to its proper Object, and rests in the Possession of it, as its true End, whether it be, or be not connected with Happiness. The End of the Speculatist is Truth, whether it redound to his Advantage, or his Disadvantage. The End of the Moralist is Rectitude, whether it conduce to his Interest or no. Considered as Moral, this is precisely the Mark that he aims at; his Judgment directing, and his Affection prompting to this Object, as in a peculiar Sense, self-worthy and self-eligible. In short, moral Good is an End, an ultimate

564 End of one Kind, as natural Good is of another. And these

Ends are so closely united and interwoven, that it is sometimes difficult to separate them even in our Conceptions. In the Pursuit of Pleasure, we have often the Consent and Concurrence of Reason; and when we pursue Reason or Virtue, Pleasure accompanies and follows. If we propose to make ourselves happy, we have Reason on our Side; and if we determine to act reasonably, Pleasure is the Consequence.— Nevertheless, they are in themselves, distinct Objects, and distinct Ends. However Pleasure may be the Consequence or Appendage of Virtue, yet, strictly speaking, it is not the End of a moral Agent, nor the Object of a moral Affection, but Virtue alone, antecedent to all Considerations, and abstracted from every natural Good. As Man is a sensible Creature, as well as moral, I deny not but certain Circumstances may be supposed, wherein, these Ends interfering, the moral Good would certainly be postponed to the natural, and the external Reasons unavoidably prevail over the internal: But such Cases can never come into Fact, and therefore need not be regarded. As God has framed our Natures in such a manner as makes it necessary for us to approve and pursue both these Ends, we may infallibly conclude, that he does not intend to suffer them finally to interfere.

565 If our Author denies that any Affection can have such an Object, or such an End, as is not advantageous or naturally good, I must refer him to an Observation of his own. He himself produces a remarkable Instance of an Affection continuing in pursuit of its Object, when known to be utterly useless and incapable of contributing, in any degree, to the Advantage of the Pursuer. The Object I speak of is future Fame, which he supposes would be desired even at the Point of Annihilation. Should he here be asked for an exciting Reason, he would answer, Affection; or for a justifying Reason, he would still answer, Affection; all Affections justifying themselves. I wish then, he would tell why abstracting all other Motives, Affection may not excite us to chuse Virtue

as well as Fame; and at least equally justify the Choice.—By the absolute Fitness of Virtue, which appears so unintelligible to our Author, no more is meant, than that inherent Goodness, that Self-Worth, which renders it fit to be chosen, pursued, practised, loved by every rational Being. As Truth is absolutely fit to be assented to; so Virtue, which is founded on Truth, is absolutely fit to be approved and practised.

566 I would further observe, that Virtue, in this View, is no less disinterested, than in that of our Author's. As he does not allow that the Pleasure which attends benevolent Actions, makes them interested, because the Agent is not excited or influenced by it; so neither can I allow that the Love of Virtue is interested, whatever Pleasure it may be attended with; forasmuch as Pleasure is no more the Motive or Excitement in this Case, than in the other.—Both publick Affection, and the Love of Virtue, gratify the Mind; but the Mind does not, or at least needs not, intend its own Gratification in either. Tho' they be Affections of a different kind, yet they are, or may be, equally generous and disinterested. Whatever Pleasure Virtue may give in the Contemplation or Practice, that Pleasure is not the chief or primary Reason of our Approbation and Esteem. We approve and esteem it for its own intrinsick Worth, antecedently to every other Consideration.—I shall only observe further, that as in Fact, we often pursue speculative Truths without so much as thinking of any Interest, and when we have found them, acquiesce in them: So good Men often propose and undertake good Actions, without thinking of any Advantage or Pleasure at all. And when the Actions are social and directed to publick Interest, yet still the Love of Reason and moral Rectitude is often the leading Principle. The Agents are beneficent and kind, in obedience to the Dictates of Reason.

567 While we act up to the Character of rational Agents, we shall be sure to follow Reason, whether it call us out in quest

of publick or private Good. Reason is the perpetual Arbitress of our several Claims and Pretensions, will inform us what we are to do for others, and what for ourselves; prevent the interfering of publick and private Interest, and adjust all imaginary Differences and Competitions between them. Reason may be considered as paramount and superior to every Interest, even that of the Publick, however it may decide in favour thereof. It would be improper and absurd to say, that we hearken to Reason for the sake of our Fellow-Creatures; but it is very just and proper to say that we oblige and serve our Fellow-Creatures, because Reason requires it. Reason both enjoins the Duty, and prescribes the Measures of it.

568 It is manifest that Reason has placed every private Interest in Subordination to publick, and if Cases may be imagined, where this Order is inverted, it is certain that such Cases can never actually happen, and therefore it is needless to take Notice of them. Were the World without a Governor, or without a Governor of infinite Wisdom and Perfection, the Nature and Circumstances of Mankind would be a Scene of mere Disorder and Confusion. They would be frequently distracted between opposite and contradictory Obligations. Since we are sensible as well as rational Creatures, Reason alone can never be self-sufficient, tho' it may be, and is self-eligible. Exclude the Belief of Providence and a future State, and in many Cases it must be owned, Virtue would not be able to support itself. Adversity and great Misery would make Men deaf to the Dictates of their own Minds; would bring them down, as it were, from Reason to Sense; as the extreme Anguish and Torture of some Distempers have forced Men to quit their erect Posture, and crawl upon the Ground.

569 But tho' this be a strong Argument for a future State, it is none against the Dignity of Virtue, or the Supremacy of a rational Principle. There can never be in Fact, a Necessity

for opposing this, or departing from it; whatever there may be in Supposition or Speculation: However therefore Men may happen to counter-act their present Interest, it is unquestionably their Duty to follow where-ever Reason and Virtue lead them. He who formed them reasonable Creatures, and thereby unavoidably subjected them to the Dictates of Reason, will assuredly take Care that they be not finally Sufferers by their Adherence thereto. He will make abundant Compensation for every Loss, and every Disadvantage hereby occasioned. To imagine otherwise, is, in effect, to suppose Inconsistency and Contrariety in the very Frame of our Nature.

570 I know not whether I need to observe, that our Author ever seems to take it for granted there is no absolute Good but natural Good; and that moral Good is no otherwise such, than as it is subservient and conductive to natural Good. On the contrary, I affirm and maintain, that tho' moral Good greatly promotes natural Good, it is moreover in itself an absolute Good. What Proof can we give of the absolute Goodness of Pleasure, but that we approve of it, upon its own Account, and pursue it for its own sake? The same Proof we have of the absolute Goodness of Virtue, which, considered by itself, and abstract from every other Thing, necessarily extorts our Approbation, and appears worthy of our Choice. Our approving and admiring it antecedently to those Satisfactions which flow from it, is an undeniable Proof of its absolute and inherent Worth.—And as Virtue is absolute Good, as well as Pleasure, so that it is of a different and superior Kind, evidently appears from this single Consideration; that whereas natural Objects are only therefore good, because they gratify; moral Objects therefore gratify, because they are good. Natural Good is mere Gratification. In moral Good there is Gratification likewise, and that of the best and noblest Kind; but it is the Consequence of original and essential Goodness. The Correspondence

or Congruity between natural Objects and their Faculties, is arbitrary and mutable; between moral Objects and their Faculties, necessary and immutable.

571 Of this Sentiment of our Author, which I last mentioned, the Opinion of the Stoicks seems to have been the Reverse. They had noble Ideas of Virtue, and clear Apprehensions of its Excellence, but unaccountably forgot, or overlooked the Constitution of Human Nature: And hence they fell into great Extravagance, and a kind of Enthusiasm. Wrapt up in Admiration of moral Good, they seemed not to acknowledge or regard any other. Had they considered that they were sensible Beings as well as moral, they could not easily have imagined that Virtue alone was self-sufficient. Their Scheme therefore must be unnatural and indefensible; I mean exclusively of a future State, the only Support of Virtue in Adversity and extreme Cases.

572 But to return; our Author lays it down, that no Reason can excite to Action previously to some End. To which I answer, that if Reason or Virtue were not itself an End to a Moral Agent, in the Manner explained above; it would still follow, that there might be a Reason exciting to Action without an End. Our Approbation of Virtue, and Affection for it, would certainly be such a Reason. That which is necessarily approved and beloved upon its own Account, may undoubtedly be chosen without any additional Motive. Though our Approbation of Virtue be necessary, yet that Necessity is only a Consequence of the intrinsic Goodness and Excellence of Virtue. Virtue is therefore worthy of that Approbation which it gains; and if worthy of our Approbation, why not of our Choice? Why should not that Worth which makes us necessarily approve of it in Speculation, recommend it to our Practice? Why should we not freely conform our Actions to our Judgments? If we plainly perceive that a Thing is right and fit to be done, and yet refuse to do it without further Excitements, do we not justly incur the double Imputation of Unreason-

ableness and Interestedness? If external Reasons be wanting, here is a strong internal one: a Compliance with which is, if I mistake not, the most perfect and most disinterested Virtue. I humbly presume the Goodness of the Deity himself proceeds from this Principle, and rests upon this Foundation. A perpetual Regard and Attachment to the internal Reasons of Things is the utmost Perfection of a moral Agent. Whether our Author will allow them to be an End, or Excitements without an End, must be left to his own Determination. But I think he must necessarily allow either the one or the other.

573 He adds, that no End can be proposed without some Instinct or Affection. To which I answer, that it has been already acknowledged, that moral Agents have, and must have, an Affection for Virtue. But why must this Affection be an Instinct? Whatever Reasons there may be for an instinctive Benevolence, I can see none for an instinctive Love of Virtue. An Object that is and appears Self-good, or intrinsically excellent, must necessarily produce Esteem and Admiration in all Minds capable of perceiving it. We find our Minds necessarily determined in favour of Virtue. But I presume such a Determination is not antecedent, but consequent to our Perceptions of this amiable Object. Even the Desire of natural Good seems to be in Reality no Instinct, tho' commonly called and reputed such. Our Affections indeed for particular Objects are manifestly instinctive, as it was requisite they should; but I see no need of supposing a previous Determination of the Mind, either to natural Good in general, or to moral. As soon as either comes to be perceived, it necessarily determines the Mind towards itself. But this Determination being consequent to Perception, is, if I mistake not, improperly called Instinct. It is indeed Affection, but that Affection, I suppose, is produced in the Mind, not antecedently planted in it.

574 Our Author observes, that if by determining ourselves freely, we mean, acting, without any Motive or exciting Reason, by

mere Election ; such kind of Action can never gain any one's Approbation. Now I readily grant there is no Merit in acting without any Motive or Reason. On the other hand, it may be affirmed that neither is there any Merit in Actions to which an Agent is driven by natural Instinct. The one of these is a worthless Use of Freedom, the other no Freedom at all. In the former Case the Man acts, but to no Purpose. In the latter he does not act, but is acted upon. Or, however, he is passive in proportion to the Influence and Operation of the Instinct. But determining ourselves freely to act and to do what appears conformable to Reason, is making the best use of both Faculties that we possibly can. And if there be no Merit in such a Conduct, we are capable of none. It is no Diminution of this Merit, that Virtue necessarily engages our Approbation, and attracts our Esteem. If all things were indifferent, and no Reasons appeared to incline our Wills one way more than another, we should have Liberty to no purpose. But surely there is a manifest and wide Difference between a rational Determination, and a mere Impulse of Nature. It is only Reason, or the Appearance of Reason, that can justify the Choice of a moral Agent ; who is no further Praise-worthy, than as he acts in Conformity thereto. Instinctive Goodness is the Creator's Goodness, not the Creature's ; so far, I mean, as it proceeds from Instinct, and is owing thereto.

575 Let us suppose two Persons equally producing any given Quantity of Beneficence, or Moment of Good ; the one merely from a sweet Disposition, and a high Degree of good Nature ; the other from Reason, Reflection, and Resolution, without any such good natural Disposition, or in Opposition to a bad one ; do I need to ask whether of these Characters is more meritorious and virtuous ? The one steers his Course with the Advantage of a fair Wind, and a strong Tide ; the other works his Way through a rough and stormy Sea, with great Care, Industry, and Application. They may appear perhaps equally amiable in the undistinguishing Eye of the World, but far other-

wise in the Sight of Heaven.—In short, I cannot have any other Idea of moral Merit, than conforming, or endeavouring to conform, our Actions to the Reasons of Things. And this, I am persuaded, is the real Foundation of all Goodness, whether human or divine.

Our Author's Reasonings concerning this Matter, being all built on the Principles which I have already considered, it is needless to proceed to a more particular Examination of them.—Nor shall I trouble the Reader with a Train of Corollaries that might easily be deduced from the foregoing Account. But the two following seeming more material and important than the rest, may deserve not only to be mentioned, but set forth particularly and at large.

- 576** The one is, that Virtue may be taught, or promoted by Instruction ; in Opposition to our Author, who denies it : Agreeably enough, I confess, to his own Principles, which naturally lead him to such a Conclusion. For if Virtue consists in an Instinct, and the Effects of that Instinct, it is evident that Instruction can avail little or nothing. But if, according to the foregoing Account, Virtue consist in the Conformity of Men's Actions to the Reasons of things ; the Advantage of moral Instruction must be very manifest. For hereby the Ignorant may be assisted in discovering and perceiving, which Actions are conformable, and which repugnant to the Nature and Circumstances of Agents, and the Relations thence arising. In ordinary Cases the Difference between Right and Wrong is so evident and notorious, that the most ignorant perceive it without Instruction. And yet even in these Cases it may be very useful, as it is very practicable, to shew more particularly and distinctly, the Reasonableness, the Fitness, and the Excellence of a virtuous Practice ; and the Unreasonableness and Unfitness, the Odiousness and Baseness, of a vicious Conduct. By these and other Topicks, properly insisted on, Men may acquire a Veneration for Virtue, and an Abhorrence of Vice. Good Dispositions may be raised or cherished in their Minds,

and evil ones checked or rooted out.—And in respect of other Duties not self-evident, their Connection with such as are, may be discovered and laid open; or they may be unfolded and resolved into simple Truths, and self-evident Propositions. And as the Ignorant may thus learn what their several Duties are, so they may be induced and prevailed upon to comply with them, not only by external Motives, but by internal Reasons drawn from the Nature of Morality and Virtue. And surely it must turn to some Account, and tend to inspire Men with right Sentiments, and virtuous Purposes, to convince them how reasonable it is to do well, and how unreasonable to do ill. Such Instruction must be useful to the Ignorant, and may contribute to reclaim the Vicious. It doubtless tends to produce such an Effect. However, it must, I think, be allowed, that since Men are reasonable Creatures, and Virtue the most reasonable thing in the World; there can be no Impossibility of reconciling, by Reason and Argument, the one to the other. Virtue therefore may be promoted by Instruction; or, in other Words, may be properly taught.

577 I cannot but observe, that amiable Conceptions of our Fellow-creatures are represented by our Author as necessary for the producing of Benevolence. Moral Goodness must be discovered in them, in order to raise our Love. But does he not confound the Affections of Benevolence and Complacency? Whether our Fellow-creatures be amiable or unamiable, deserving or undeserving, they are sensible, and, as such, Objects of our Benevolence. Their very Sensibility is their Title, which holds good where there is nothing else to be pleaded in their Behalf.—Here then is an Instance of the Benefit and Usefulness of Instruction. Men are too apt to imagine that the Worthless and the Wicked have no claim to their Regard. But they may be informed and convinced, that such Objects have a Claim to their Benevolence, and can never forfeit it, till they become insensible.

578 The other Consequence of the foregoing Account is, that

there may be real Virtue in such Actions as respect the Agent himself, and are directed to his own Advantage. If Virtue consist in acting conformably to Reason, and if Reason not only allows, but requires the Agent (as it certainly does) to regard his own Good, in Subordination to that of the Publick ; it must needs follow, that such a Conduct is, or may be virtuous. On the contrary, our Author does not allow such Actions to be virtuous, any otherwise than as they conduce to publick Good, and are directed thereto. Thus Temperance, for Instance, he grants to be laudable and virtuous under the foresaid Reference, but not otherwise. In no other Respect will he allow it to be morally good, however naturally good, or advantageous to Health.

579 But I presume there is other Merit besides this, in the Discharge of what we may call Self-duties. Were any Man supposed alone, without any Fellow-creatures in the Universe ; would there be no Merit, no moral Goodness, in the highest Improvement of his Faculties, and the exactest Government of his Appetites and Inclinations ? Tho' he conformed all his Actions to the Rules of right Reason ; checking every Desire, and denying himself every Gratification inconsistent therewith ; would there be nothing laudable, nothing meritorious in such a Conduct as this ? On the contrary, would it not be very acceptable to the Deity, and procure the Man his Approbation and Favour ? Why then, and upon what Account would it be thus acceptable ? I suppose it will be answered, as the Man was hereby better fitted for the Discharge of those Duties which were owing to his Maker. But surely it must be granted, that his Maker would be incapable of receiving the least Benefit from such a Conduct. What Advantage therefore, or natural Good the Man proposed, must terminate in himself, and be directed accordingly. But prior to this View must be supposed his Regard to Moral Good. Those Acts of Praise, Adoration and Thanksgiving, which were offered by him to the Creator, must primarily

and immediately flow from a regard to the intrinsick Reason and Rectitude of the Thing, which is Moral Good ; and secondarily (as Reason permits and prescribes) to his own Advantage or Natural Good ; which indeed would be all the natural Good that he could have in view. Such an Homage, and such a Deference paid to that sacred Law of eternal Truth and Rectitude, which obliges even the Deity himself, and whose Will therefore it must be, is the truest Glory that can be given by a Creature to the Creator. It may be looked upon not only as a Submission to the Divine Will, but as a Conformity to the Divine Understanding ; on the Agreement of which is founded that Goodness which is infinitely perfect.

580 But to return to the Supposition of the solitary Agent ; if he only aimed at that Self-good to which Reason directed, and pursued it by the most reasonable and laudable Means ; what could be wanting to denominate and constitute such a Behaviour truly virtuous ? If neglecting the Care and Culture of his Mind, he gave himself up to sensual Pleasure, and subjected his Reason to his Appetites ; as he must renounce all Pretension to Virtue so he would grossly neglect his own Interest. But as he is supposed to take a quite contrary Method ; he must either be reputed virtuous, or pronounced incapable of Virtue.—And as a due Performance of the Self-duties would be laudable and virtuous upon such a Supposition ; so is it without the Supposition, though differently circumstanced. The Co-existence of innumerable Fellow-creatures makes room for other Duties, and another kind of Virtue ; but does not cancel the Obligation we are speaking of, nor extinguish the Merit and moral Rectitude of such Actions as respect ourselves.

581 The primary Dictate of Right Reason is, that every moral Agent intend the Good of the Whole, or aim at universal Good. In this universal Good, the private Good of every Individual is included. From hence it follows, that if any Agent,

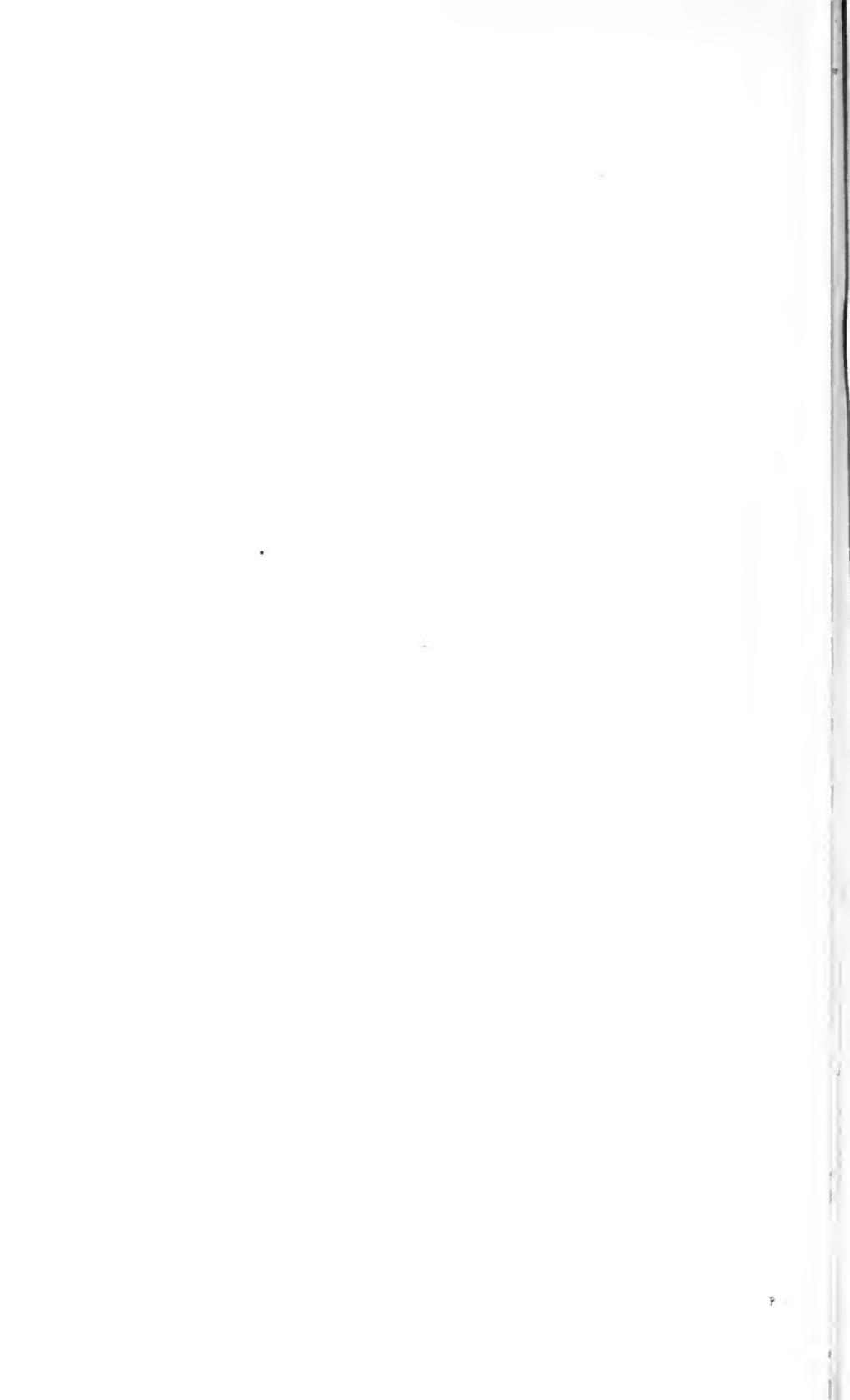
in the View and Pursuit of common Good, could be supposed to exclude his own ; such an Intention and such a Conduct would be less virtuous than if he had included it. It must therefore be granted, that for any Man to aim at his own Welfare, in Subordination to that of the Publick, is not only innocent, but morally good.—But tho' such Self-views as these are perfectly right and reasonable in themselves ; yet the Question is, how they are affected by the Circumstances of the Agent. Tho' it be at least as reasonable to consult his own Good, as that of any other Individual ; yet it must be allowed that a good Office done to another, appears generally more amiable, and even more virtuous, than a like Kindness done to himself. How then comes it to pass, that Social and Self-kindness make such a different Appearance ? Is there some peculiar Grace and Beauty superadded to our Perceptions of the former, by an internal Sense implanted in our Minds for that Purpose ?

- 582** However that be, the foresaid Difference is easily accounted for. Our Self-affections are so much stronger than natural Benevolence, and our private Instincts than publick ones ; that the Regard shewn, and the Good done to ourselves appear in a great measure necessary. Considered in this Light, they must needs seem less amiable, and less meritorious than Actions done merely, or chiefly, in Conformity to Reason. What I observed before of parental Kindness, may be here applied to Self-love ; whether it be considered as an Instinct, or as a necessary Consequence of experienced Good. But though this circumstance renders Self-kindness less amiable, and less meritorious ; yet it does by no means set it upon a Level with Actions morally indifferent. And in some Cases it leaves room for a Conduct highly virtuous.—However useful our Instincts may be, when under the Direction of Reason, as Nature designed ; yet they are very insufficient Guides of themselves, for human Nature ; and in many Cases would lead Men aside from their true Interest, instead of

bringing them to it. Consider them as undirected by Reason, and we shall find that they prompt us to prefer a trivial Enjoyment that is present, to a very great one at a Distance. That they prompt us also to pursue sensual Gratifications to the Neglect of more refined Pleasures, and sublimer Enjoyments. These Instincts therefore, strong and powerful as they are, must be often restrained and resisted by the Reason of every Man who pretends to act either virtuously or wisely. In many Cases, instead of gratifying, he must oppose his keenest Appetites, and most urgent Inclinations, by a generous Self-denial. He must curb and keep in his eager Passions, lest instead of being subservient to a higher Principle, they run away with it. On these Accounts there is abundant room for the Exercise of Self-virtue, notwithstanding the Strength and Prevalence of Self-love. Accordingly we find that such a Conduct appears not only reasonable and right, but beautiful and lovely; and that it is beheld by others with Pleasure, as well as Approbation. To see a Man engaged in a resolute Struggle with a foward Disposition; to see him resisting a clamorous Appetite, or subduing a headstrong Passion, cannot but be agreeable to intelligent Spectators, whether they regard his Actions in relation to Society or no. And indeed were the Agent alone in the World, according to the foregoing Supposition, such a Conduct would still be amiable, still meritorious. Thus, I think, it plainly appears, that aiming at private Welfare is not inconsistent with real Virtue; but when rightly circumstantiated, productive of it.—I shall only add, that the greatest Self-good which a Man can possibly propose, is the perpetual Enjoyment of Virtue. Such an Aim will be allowed to be virtuous, as the Good aimed at is necessarily connected with publick Interest, or the Good of the Whole. And yet it is manifest in this Case, that private Advantage is a real Part of the Object desired. Nevertheless this is so far from lessening the Goodness of the Pursuit, that it increases it, as I before

observed. To be influenced in our Conduct by the Prospect of such a Reward, can be no Diminution of our present Virtue ; but is, on the contrary, an Addition to it.

83 Upon the whole, our End and our Business, as Men and Moral Agents, is to pursue Virtue, leaving the Consequence to our Maker ; who, as he has made us capable of Truth, Virtue, and Happiness, will undoubtedly take care to make them finally compatible and co-incident. So great is, or will be, the Harmony among them, that they may rather be looked upon as one and the same End, than as distinct and several. The Foundation of Virtue is Truth, and the Foundation of Happiness, Virtue.



RICHARD PRICE

*A REVIEW OF THE PRINCIPAL
QUESTIONS IN MORALS*

[First edition, 1758. Reprinted here from the third edition, 1787.]

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A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals

CHAPTER I.—OF THE ORIGIN OF OUR IDEAS OF RIGHT AND WRONG.

584 IN considering the actions of moral agents, we shall find in ourselves three different perceptions concerning them, which are necessary to be carefully distinguished.

The first, is our perception of right and wrong.

The second, is our perception of beauty and deformity.

The third we express, when we say, that actions are of good or ill desert.

Each of these perceptions I propose separately to examine, but particularly the first, with which I shall begin.

It is proper the reader should carefully attend to the state of the question here to be considered; which, as clearly as as I can, I shall lay before him.

SECTION I.—THE QUESTION STATED CONCERNING THE FOUNDATION OF MORALS.

585 Some actions we all feel ourselves irresistibly determined to approve, and others to disapprove. Some actions we cannot

but think right, and others wrong, and of all actions we are led to form some opinion, as either fit to be performed or unfit ; or neither fit nor unfit to be performed ; that is, indifferent. What the power within us is, which thus determines, is the question to be considered.

A late very distinguished writer, Dr. Hutcheson, deduces our moral ideas from a moral sense ; meaning by this sense, a power within us, different from reason, which renders certain actions pleasing and others displeasing to us. As we are so made, that certain impressions on our bodily organs shall excite certain ideas in our minds, and that certain outward forms, when presented to us, shall be the necessary occasions of pleasure or pain ; in like manner, according to Dr. Hutcheson, we are so made, that certain affections and actions of moral agents shall be the necessary occasions of agreeable or disagreeable sensations in us, and procure our love or dislike of them. He has indeed well shewn, that we have a faculty determining us immediately to approve or disapprove actions, abstracted from all views of private advantage ; and that the highest pleasures of life depend upon this faculty. Had he proceeded no farther, and intended nothing more by the moral sense, than our moral faculty in general, little room would have been left for any objections : But then he would have meant by it nothing new, and he could not have been considered as the discoverer of it. From the term sense, which he applies to it, from his rejection of all the arguments that have been used to prove it to be an intellectual power, and from the whole of his language on this subject ; it is evident, he considered it as the effect of a positive constitution of our minds, or as an implanted and arbitrary principle by which a relish is given us for certain moral objects and forms and aversion to others, similar to the relishes and aversions created by any of our other senses. In other words ; our ideas of morality, if this account is right, have the same origin with our ideas of the sensible qualities of bodies, the

harmony of sounds¹, or the beauties of painting or sculpture ; that is, the mere good pleasure of our Maker adapting the mind and its organs in a particular manner to certain objects. Virtue (as those who embrace this scheme say) is an affair of taste. Moral right and wrong, signify nothing in the objects themselves to which they are applied, any more than agreeable and harsh ; sweet and bitter ; pleasant and painful ; but only certain effects in us. Our perception of right, or moral good, in actions, is that agreeable emotion, or feeling, which certain actions produce in us ; and of wrong, or moral evil, the contrary. They are particular modifications of our minds, or impressions which they are made to receive from the contemplation of certain actions, which the contrary actions might have occasioned, had the Author of nature so pleased ; and which to suppose to belong to these actions themselves, is as absurd as to ascribe the pleasure or uneasiness, which the observation of a particular form gives us, to the form itself. 'Tis therefore, by this account, improper to say of an action, that it is right, in much the same sense that it is improper to say of an object of taste, that it is sweet ; or of pain, that it is in fire.

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586 As to the schemes which found morality on self-love, on positive laws and compacts, or the Divine will ; they must either mean, that moral good and evil are only other words for advantageous and disadvantageous, willed and forbidden. Or they relate to a very different question ; that is, not to the question, what is the nature and true account of virtue ; but, what is the subject-matter of it².

¹ If any person wants to be convinced, that this is a just representation of Dr. Hutcheson's sentiments, he need only read his *Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, and particularly the fourth section at the conclusion. See also a Note at the end of the first of Mr. Hume's *Philosophical Essays*.

² It should be considered, that the phrase foundation of virtue has the different significations of an account or origin of virtue ; of a consideration or principle inferring and proving it in particular cases ; and of

587 As far as the former may be the intention of the schemes I have mentioned, they afford little room for controversy. Right and wrong when applied to actions which are commanded or forbidden by the will of God, or that produce good or harm, do not signify merely, that such actions are commanded or forbidden, or that they are useful or hurtful, but a sentiment concerning them and our consequent approbation or disapprobation of the performance of them. Were not this true, it would be palpably absurd in any case to ask, whether it is right to obey a command, or wrong to disobey it ; and the propositions, obeying a command is right, or producing happiness is right, would be most trifling, as expressing no more than that obeying a command, is obeying a command, or producing happiness, is producing happiness. Besides ; on the supposition, that right and wrong denote only the relations of actions to will and law, or to happiness and misery, there could be no dispute about the faculty that perceives right and wrong, since it must be owned by all, that these relations are objects of the investigations of reason.

Happiness requires something in its own nature, or in ours, to give it influence, and to determine our desire of it and approbation of pursuing it. In like manner ; all laws, will, and compacts suppose antecedent right to give them effect ; and, instead of being the constituents of right, they owe their whole force and obligation to it.

588 Having premised these observations ; the question now returns—What is the power within us that perceives the distinctions of right and wrong ?

My answer is. The understanding.

In order to prove this, it is necessary to enter into a particular enquiry into the origin of our ideas in general, and the distinct provinces of the understanding and of sense.

a motive to the practice of it : and that it is here used in the first of these senses only.—See the beginning of the last Chapter in the Second Part.

SECTION II.—OF THE ORIGIN OF OUR IDEAS
IN GENERAL.

589 Sensation and Reflection have been commonly reckoned the sources of all our ideas : and Mr. Locke has taken no small pains to prove this. How much soever, on the whole, I admire his excellent Essay, I cannot think him sufficiently clear or explicit on this subject. It is hard to determine exactly what he meant by sensation and reflection. If by the former we understand, the effects arising from the impressions made on our minds by external objects ; and by the latter, the notice the mind takes of its own operations ; it will be impossible to derive some of the most important of our ideas from them. This is the explanation Mr. Locke gives of them in the beginning of his Essay. But it seems probable that what he chiefly meant, was, that all our ideas are either derived immediately from these two sources, or ultimately grounded upon ideas so derived ; or, in other words, that they furnish us with all the subjects, materials, and occasions of knowledge, comparison, and internal perception. This, however, by no means renders them in any proper sense, the sources of all our ideas : Nor indeed does it appear, notwithstanding all he has said of the operations of the mind about its ideas, that he thought we had any faculty different from sensation and reflection which could give rise to any simple ideas ; or that was capable of more than compounding, dividing, abstracting, or enlarging ideas previously in the mind. But be this as it may, what I am going to observe, will, I believe, be found true.

590 The power, I assert, that understands ; or the faculty within us that discerns truth, and that compares all the objects of thought, and judges of them, is a spring of new ideas¹.

¹ The reader is desired to remember, that by ideas, I mean here almost constantly simple ideas, or original and uncompounded perceptions of the mind. That our ideas of right and wrong are of this sort, will be particularly observed hereafter. It may also be right to take notice, that I all

As, perhaps, this has not been enough attended to, and as the question to be discussed, is ; whether our moral ideas are derived from the understanding or from a sense ; it will be necessary to state distinctly the different natures and provinces of sense and reason.

591 To this purpose we may observe, first, that the power which judges of the perceptions of the senses, and contradicts their decisions ; which discovers the nature of the sensible qualities of objects, enquires into their causes, and distinguishes between what is real and what is not real in them, must be a power within us which is superior to sense.

Again, it is plain that one sense cannot judge of the objects of another ; the eye, for instance, of harmony, or the ear of colours. The faculty therefore which views and compares the objects of all the senses, cannot be sense. When, for instance, we consider sound and colour together, we observe in them essence, number, identity, diversity, &c. and determine their reality to consist, not in being properties of external substances, but in being modifications of our souls. The power which takes cognizance of all this, and gives rise to these notions, must be a power capable of subjecting all things alike to its inspection, and of acquainting itself with necessary truth and existence.

592 Sense consists in the obtruding of certain impressions upon us, independently of our wills ; but it cannot perceive what they are, or whence they are derived. It lies prostrate under its object, and is only a capacity in the soul of having

along speak of the understanding, in the most confined and proper sense of it. What gives occasion for observing this, is the division which has been made by some writers, of all the powers of the soul into understanding and will ; the former comprehending under it, all the powers of external and internal sensation, as well as those of judging and reasoning ; and the latter, all the affections of the mind, as well as the power of acting and determining.

There may be further some occasion for observing, that the two acts of the understanding, being intuition and deduction, I have in view the former. 'Tis plain, on the contrary, that those writers, who argue against referring our moral ideas to reason, have generally the latter only in view.

its own state altered by the influence of particular causes. It must therefore remain a stranger to the objects and causes affecting it.

Were not sense and knowledge entirely different, we should rest satisfied with sensible impressions, such as light, colours, and sounds, and enquire no farther about them, at least when the impressions are strong and vigorous: Whereas, on the contrary, we necessarily desire some farther acquaintance with them, and can never be satisfied till we have subjected them to the survey of reason.—Sense presents particular forms to the mind; but cannot rise to any general ideas. It is the intellect that examines and compares the presented forms, that rises above individuals to universal and abstract ideas; and thus looks downward upon objects, takes in at one view an infinity of particulars, and is capable of discovering general truths.—Sense sees only the outside of things, reason acquaints itself with their natures.—Sensation is only a mode of feeling in the mind; but knowledge implies an active and vital energy of the mind. Feeling pain, for example, is the effect of sense; but the understanding is employed when pain itself is made an object of the mind's reflexion, or held up before it, in order to discover its nature and causes. Mere sense can perceive nothing in the most exquisite work of art; suppose a plant, or the body of an animal; but what is painted in the eye, or what might be described on paper. It is the intellect that must perceive in it order and proportion; variety and regularity; design, connexion, art, and power; aptitudes, dependencies, correspondencies, and adjustment of parts so as to subserve an end, and compose one perfect whole¹; things which can never be represented on a sensible organ, and the ideas of which cannot be passively communicated, or stamped

¹ See Dr. Cudworth's *Treatise of eternal and immutable Morality*, Book IV. Chap. 2, where he observes, that the mind perceives, by occasion of outward objects, as much more than is represented to it by sense, as a learned man perceives in the best written book, more than an illiterate person or brute.

on the mind by the operation of external objects.—Sense cannot perceive any of the modes of thinking beings ; these can be discovered only by the mind's survey of itself.

593 In a word, it appears that sense and understanding are faculties of the soul totally different : The one being conversant only about particulars ; the other about universals : The one not discerning, but suffering ; the other not suffering, but discerning ; and signifying the soul's Power of surveying and examining all things, in order to judge of them ; which Power, perhaps, can hardly be better defined, than by calling it, in Plato's language, the power in the soul to which belongs *κατάληψις τοῦ ὄντος*, or the apprehension of Truth¹.

594 But, in order farther to shew how little a way mere sense (and let me add imagination, a faculty nearly allied to sense) can go, and how far we are dependent on our higher reasonable powers for many of our fundamental ideas ; I would instance in the following particulars.

The idea of solidity has been generally reckoned among the ideas we owe to sense ; and yet perhaps it would be difficult to prove, that we ever had actual experience of that impenetrability which we include in it, and consider as essential to all bodies. In order to this, we must be sure, that we have, some time or other, made two bodies really touch, and found that they would not penetrate one another : but it is not impossible to account for all the facts we observe, without supposing, in any case, absolute contact between bodies. And though we could make the experiment, yet one experiment, or even a million, could not be a sufficient foundation for the absolute assurance we have that no bodies can penetrate one another. Not to add, that all that would appear to the senses in such experiments, would be the conjunction of two events, not their necessary connexion. Are we then to affirm, that there is no

¹ Most of these observations concerning the difference between sense and knowledge, may be found in Plato's *Theætetus* ; and in the Treatise quoted in the last note.

idea of impenetrability ; that two atoms of matter, continuing distinct and without the annihilation of either, may occupy the same place ; and all the atoms of matter be crowded into the room and bulk of one ; and these, for the same reason, into room less and less to infinity, without in the meanwhile making any diminution of the quantity of matter in the universe ? This, indeed, might be the consequence, were it certain that all our ideas, on this subject, are derived from sensation ; and did nothing further than it acquaints us with, appear to reason. There are many instances in which two material substances apparently run into one another. It is reason, that, from its own perceptions, determines such to be fallacious appearances, and assures us of the universal and strict necessity of the contrary. The same power that perceives two particles to be different, perceives them to be impenetrable ; for they are as necessarily the one as the other ; it being self-evident, that they cannot occupy the same place without losing all difference.

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595 The next ideas I shall instance in are those of Power and Causation. Some of the ideas already mentioned imply them ; but they require our particular notice and attention. Nothing may, at first sight, seem more obvious, than that one way in which they are conveyed to the mind, is, by observing the various changes that happen about us, and our constant experience of the events arising upon such and such applications of external objects to one another : And yet I am well persuaded, that this experience is alone quite incapable of furnishing us with these ideas.

What we observe by our external senses, is properly no more than that one thing follows another¹, or the constant

¹ Several observations to this purpose are made by Malebranche, who ('tis well known) has maintained, that nothing in nature is ever the proper cause or efficient of another, but only the occasion ; the Deity, according to him, being the sole agent in all effects and events. But Mr. Hume has more particularly insisted on the observation here made, with a very different view. See his *Phil. Essays*.

conjunction of certain events; as of the melting of wax, with placing it in the flame of a candle; and, in general, of such and such alterations in the qualities of bodies, with such and such circumstances of their situation. That one thing is the cause of another, or produces it, we never see: Nor is it indeed true, in numberless instances where men commonly think they observe it: And were it in no one instance true; I mean, were there no object that contributed, by its own proper force, to the production of any new event; were the apparent causes of things universally only their occasions or concomitants; (which is nearly the real case, according to some philosophical principles;) yet still we should have the same ideas of cause, and effect, and power. Our certainty that every new event requires some cause, depends no more on experience than our certainty of any other the most obvious subject of intuition. In the idea of every change is included that of its being an effect.

596 The necessity of a cause of whatever events arise is an essential principle, a primary perception of the understanding; nothing being more palpably absurd than the notion of a change which has been derived from nothing, and of which there is no reason to be given; of an existence which has begun, but never was produced; of a body, for instance, that has ceased to move, but has not been stopped; or that has begun to move, without being moved. Nothing can be done to convince a person, who professes to deny this, besides referring him to common sense. If he cannot find there the perception I have mentioned, he is not farther to be argued with, for the subject will not admit of argument; there being nothing clearer than the point itself disputed to be brought to confirm it. And he who will acknowledge that we have such a perception, but will at the same time say that it is to be ascribed to a different power from the understanding, should inform us why the same should not be asserted of all self-evident truth.

597 It should be observed, that I have not said that we have no

idea of power, except from the understanding. Activity and self-determination are as essential to spirit, as the contrary are to matter ; and therefore inward consciousness gives us the idea of that particular sort of power which they imply. But the universal source of the idea of power, as we conceive it necessary to the production of all that happens, and of our notions of influence, connection, aptitude, and dependence in general, must be the understanding. Some active or passive powers, some capacity or possibility of receiving changes and producing them, make an essential part of our ideas of all objects : And these powers differ according to the different natures of the objects, and their different relations to one another. What can do nothing ; what is fitted to answer no purpose, and has no kind of dependence, aptitude, or power belonging to it, can be nothing real or substantial. Were all things wholly unconnected and loose ; and did no one event or object, in any circumstances, imply any thing beyond itself ; all the foundations of knowledge would be destroyed. It is, on all hands, confessed, that things appear otherwise to us, and that in numberless instances we are under a necessity of considering them as connected, and of inferring one thing from another. Why should not this be accounted for by a real connexion between the things themselves ? Is it possible, for example, any one should think, that there is no sort of real connexion perceiveable by reason, between probity of mind and just actions, or between certain impulses of bodies on one another and an alteration of their motions ?

598 Indeed, the whole meaning of accounting for a fact, implies something in the nature of objects and events that includes a connexion between them, or a fitness in certain ways to influence one another. ‘Till we can discover this, we are always conscious of somewhat farther to be known. While we only see one thing constantly attending or following another, without perceiving the real dependence and connexion ; (as in the case of gravitation, and the sensations attending

certain impressions on our bodily organs) we are necessarily dissatisfied, and feel a state of mind very different from that entire acquiescence, which we experience upon considering Sir Isaac Newton's laws of motion, or any other instances and facts, in which we see the necessary connexion and truth.

589 In conformity to these observations we always find, that when we have adequate ideas of the natures and properties of any beings or objects, we at the same time perceive their powers, and can foretel, independently of experience, what they will produce in given circumstances, and what will follow upon such and such applications of them to one another.

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And, had we a perfect insight into the constitution of nature, the laws that govern it, and the motions, texture, and relations of the several bodies that compose it; the whole chain of future events in it would be laid open to us. Experience and observation are only of use, when we are ignorant of the nature of the object, and cannot, in a more perfect, short, and certain way, determine what will be the event in particular cases, and what are the uses of particular objects¹. Instinct is a still

¹ The conviction produced by experience is built on the same principle with that which assures us, that there must be a cause of every event, and some account of whatever happens. The frequent repetition of a particular event, as of the falling of a heavy body to the earth, produces an expectation of its happening again in future trials: Because we see intuitively, that there being some reason or cause of this constancy of event, it must be derived from a cause regularly and constantly operating in given circumstances. In the very same manner, and upon the same principle, we should conclude, upon observing a particular number on a die thrown very often without one failure, that it would be thrown also in any succeeding trial: And the more frequently and uninterruptedly we knew this had happened, the stronger would be our expectation of its happening again, because the more evident would it be, that either all the sides of the die were marked with the same number, or that some art was used in throwing it, or that there was something in the constitution of it that disposed it to turn up that particular side, rather than any other.—However strange it may appear, it is probably true, that what occasions the doubts and difficulties which are raised about this, and some other points of the clearest nature, is their being self-evident; and that what is meant by saying, that it is not reason that informs us there must be some account of whatever comes to pass, and some established causes of constant and uniform events, or that order and regularity can

lower and more imperfect means of supplying the same defect of knowledge.

* * * * *

600 Let me add, in the last place, that our abstract ideas seem most properly to belong to the understanding. They are, undoubtedly, essential to all its operations; every act of judgment implying some abstract or universal idea. Were they formed by the mind in the manner generally represented, it seems unavoidable to conceive that it has them at the very time that it is supposed to be employed in forming them. Thus; from any particular idea of a triangle, it is said we can frame the general one; but does not the very reflexion said to be necessary to this, on a greater or lesser triangle, imply, that the general idea is already in the mind? How else should it know how to go to work, or what to reflect on?—That the universality consists in the idea; and not merely in the name as used to signify a number of particulars resembling that which is the immediate object of reflexion, is plain; because, was the idea to which the name answers and which it recalls into the mind, only a particular one, we could not know to what other ideas to apply it, or what particular objects had the resemblance necessary to bring them within the meaning of the name. A person, in reading over a mathematical demonstration, certainly is conscious that it relates to somewhat else, than just that precise figure presented to him in the diagram. But if he knows not what else, of what use can the demonstration be to him? How is his knowledge enlarged by it? Or how shall he know afterwards to what to apply it?—All that can be pictured in the imagination, as well as all that we take notice of by our senses, is indeed particular. And whenever any general notions are present in the mind, the imagination, at the same time, is commonly engaged in representing to

proceed only from design, must be, that they are not subjects of deduction; that is, that they are so plain, that there is nothing plainer from which they can be inferred.

itself some of the particulars comprehended under them. But it would be a very strange inference from hence, that we have none but particular ideas. As well almost might we conclude, that we have no other notion of any thing than of its name, because they are so associated in our minds that we cannot separate them ; or of the sun, than as a white, bright circle, such as we see in the heavens, because this image is apt to accompany all our thoughts of it¹.

602 It is a capital error, into which those persons run who confound the understanding with the imagination, and deny reality and possibility to every thing the latter cannot conceive, however clear and certain to the former. The powers of the imagination are very narrow ; and were the understanding confined to the same limits, nothing could be known, and the very faculty itself would be annihilated.—Nothing is plainer, than that one of these often perceives where the other is blind ; is surrounded with light where the other finds

601 ¹ According to Dr. Cudworth, abstract ideas are implied in the cognoscitive power of the mind ; which, he says, contains in itself virtually (as the future plant or tree is contained in the seed) general notions of all things, which are exerted by it, or unfold and discover themselves as occasions invite and proper circumstances occur. This, no doubt, many will very freely condemn as whimsical and extravagant. I have, I own, a different opinion of it; but yet, I should not care to be obliged to defend it. It is what he thought, Plato meant by making all knowledge to be Reminiscence ; and in this, as well as other respects, he makes the human mind to resemble the Divine ; to which the ideas and comprehension of all things are essential, and not to be derived from any foreign source.

It may at least be said, that thought, knowledge, and understanding, being the originals and causes of all particular sensibles, and therefore before them and above them, cannot be derived from them, or dependent upon them ; and that what is thus true of mind in general, and particularly of that first and all-disposing mind from which all inferior minds sprung and of which they participate, 'tis reasonable to think true, in a lower degree also of these inferior minds, and of their ideas and knowledge.

The opinion that universal ideas are formed out of particular ones, by separating common from individuating circumstances, this learned writer rejects as very absurd, and founded on a mistake of Aristotle's sense. And the other opinion, that they are only singular ideas annexed to a common term ; or in other words, names without any meaning ; (held formerly by those, who were therefore called Nominalists, and of late revived) he pronounces to be so ridiculously false, as to deserve no confutation. Vid. *Eternal and Immutable Morality*.

all darkness ; and, in numberless instances, knows things to exist of which the other can frame no idea. What is more impossible, than for the imagination to represent to itself matter without colour ; but thus is it perceived by the understanding, which pronounces, without doubt or hesitation, that colour is not a property of matter. Points, lines, and surfaces, also, as mathematicians consider them, are entirely intellectual objects no notice whereof ever entered the mind by the senses, and which are utterly inconceivable to the imagination. Does it follow from hence, that there are no such things ? Are we to believe that there can exist no particles of matter smaller than we can imagine to ourselves, or that there is no other kind or degree of equality, than can be judged of by the eye ? This has been maintained ; and on the same principles we must go on to say, that the mind itself and its operations are just what they appear to every one's reflexion, and that it is not possible for us to mistake in thinking of what we have formerly done or thought, or what we shall hereafter do or think. But surely, that philosophy cannot be very inviting, which thus explodes all independent truth and reality, resolves knowledge into particular modifications of sense and imagination, and makes these the measures of all things.

603 When I consider these things, I cannot help wondering, that, in enquiring into the origin of our ideas, the understanding, which, though not first in time, is the most important source of our ideas, should have been overlooked. It has, indeed, been always considered as the source of knowledge : But it should have been more attended to, that as the source of knowledge, it is likewise the source of new ideas, and that it cannot be one of these without being the other. The various kinds of agreement and disagreement between our ideas, which Mr. Locke says, it is its office to discover and trace, are so many new simple ideas, obtained by its discernment. Thus ; when it considers the two angles made by a right line, standing in any direction on another, and perceives the

agreement between them and two right angles; what is this agreement besides their equality? And is not the idea of this equality a new simple idea, acquired by the understanding, wholly different from that of the two angles compared, and denoting self-evident truth?—In much the same manner in other cases, knowledge and intuition suppose somewhat perceived in their objects, denoting simple ideas to which themselves gave rise.—This is true of our ideas of proportion; of our ideas of identity and diversity, existence, connexion, cause and effect, power, possibility and impossibility; and let me add, though prematurely, of our ideas of moral right and wrong. The first concerns quantity; the last actions; the rest all things. They comprehend the most considerable part of what we can desire to know of things, and are the objects of almost all reasonings and disquisitions¹.

In short. As bodily sight discovers to us visible objects; so does the understanding, (the eye of the mind, and infinitely more penetrating) discover to us intelligible objects; and thus, in a like sense with bodily vision, becomes the inlet of new ideas.

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604 It is an observation very necessary to be made, before we leave what we are now upon, that the source of ideas on which I have insisted, is different from the power of reasoning, and ought, by no means, to be confounded with it. This consists in investigating certain relations between objects, ideas of which must have been previously in the mind: that is; it supposes us already to have the ideas we want to trace; and

¹ We find Socrates, to the like effect, in *Thæctet.* (after observing, that it cannot be any of the powers of sense that compares the perceptions of all the senses, and apprehends the general affections of things, and particularly identity, number, similitude, dissimilitude, equality, inequality, to which he adds, *καλὸν καὶ αἰσχρόν;*) asserting, that this power is reason, or the soul acting by itself separately from matter, and independently of any corporeal impressions or passions; and that, consequently, in opposition to Protagoras, knowledge is not to be sought for in sense, but in this superior part of the soul.

therefore cannot give rise to new ideas. No mind can be engaged in investigating it knows not what ; or in endeavouring to find out any thing concerning an object, of which it has no conception. When, from the view of objects to which they belong self-evidently, we have gained ideas of proportion, identity, connexion, &c. we employ deduction, or reasoning, to trace these amongst other objects, and in other instances, where they cannot be perceived immediately.

SECTION III.—OF THE ORIGIN OF OUR IDEAS OF MORAL RIGHT AND WRONG.

605 Let us now return to our first enquiry, and apply the foregoing observations to our ideas of right and wrong in particular.

"Tis a very necessary previous observation, that our ideas of right and wrong are simple ideas, and must therefore be ascribed to some power of immediate perception in the human mind. He that doubts this, need only try to give definitions of them, which shall amount to more than synonymous expressions. Most of the confusion in which the question concerning the foundation of morals has been involved has proceeded from inattention to this remark. There are, undoubtedly, some actions that are ultimately approved, and for justifying which no reason can be assigned ; as there are some ends, which are ultimately desired, and for chusing which no reason can be given. Were not this true, there would be an infinite progression of reasons and ends, and therefore nothing could be at all approved or desired.

606 Supposing then, that we have a power immediately perceiving right and wrong : the point I am now to endeavour to prove, is, that this power is the Understanding, agreeably to the assertion at the end of the first section. I cannot but flatter myself, that the main obstacle to the acknowledgment of this, has been already removed, by the observations made

in the preceding section, to shew that the understanding is a power of immediate perception, which gives rise to new original ideas; nor do I think it possible that there should have been many disputes on this subject had this been properly considered.

But, in order more explicitly and distinctly to evince what I have asserted (in the only way the nature of the question seems capable of) let me,

607 First, Observe, that it implies no absurdity, but evidently may be true. It is undeniable, that many of our ideas are derived from our intuition of truth, or the discernment of the natures of things by the understanding. This therefore may be the source of our moral ideas. It is at least possible, that right and wrong may denote what we understand and know concerning certain objects, in like manner with proportion and disproportion, connexion and repugnancy, contingency and necessity, and the other ideas before-mentioned.—I will add, that nothing has been offered which has any tendency to prove the contrary. All that can appear, from the objections and reasonings of the Author of the Enquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty and virtue, is only, what has been already observed, and what does not in the least affect the point in debate: Namely, that the words right and wrong, fit and unfit, express simple and undeniable ideas. But that the power perceiving them is properly a sense and not reason; that these ideas denote nothing true of actions, nothing in the nature of actions; this, he has left entirely without proof. He appears, indeed, to have taken for granted, that if virtue and vice are immediately perceived, they must be perceptions of an implanted sense. But no conclusion could have been more hasty. For will any one take upon him to say, that all powers of immediate perception must be arbitrary and implanted; or that there can be no simple ideas denoting any thing besides the qualities and passions of the mind?—In short. Whatever some writers have said to the contrary, it is

certainly a point not yet decided, that virtue is wholly factitious, and to be felt not understood.

608 As there are some propositions, which, when attended to, necessarily determine all minds to believe them : And as (which will be shewn hereafter) there are some ends, whose natures are such, that, when perceived, all beings immediately and necessarily desire them : So is it very credible, that, in like manner, there are some actions whose natures are such, that, when observed, all rational beings immediately and necessarily approve them.

609 I do not at all care what follows from Mr. Hume's assertion, that all our ideas are either impressions, or copies of impressions¹; or from Mr. Locke's assertion that they are all deducible from sensation and reflexion.—The first of these assertions is, I think, destitute of all proof; supposes, when applied in this as well as many other cases, the point in question ; and, when pursued to its consequences, ends in the destruction of all truth and the subversion of our intellectual faculties.—The other wants much explication to render it consistent with any tolerable account of the original of our moral ideas : Nor does there seem to be any thing necessary to convince a person, that all our ideas are not deducible from sensation and reflexion, except taken in a very large and comprehensive sense, besides considering how Mr. Locke derives from them our moral ideas. He places them among our ideas of relations, and represents rectitude as signifying the conformity of actions to some rules or laws ; which rules or laws, he says, are either the will of God, the decrees of the magistrate, or the fashion of the country : From whence it follows, that it is an absurdity to apply rectitude to rules and laws themselves ; to suppose the divine will to be directed by it ; or to consider it as itself a rule and law. But, it is undoubted, that this great man would have detested these consequences ; and, indeed, it is

¹ See Mr. Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* and *Philosophical Essays*.

sufficiently evident, that he was strangely embarrassed in his notions on this, as well as some other subjects. But,

610 Secondly, I know of no better way of determining this point, than by referring those who doubt about it to common sense, and putting them upon considering the nature of their own perceptions.—Could we suppose a person, who, when he perceived an external object, was at a loss to determine whether he perceived it by means of his organs of sight or touch ; what better method could be taken to satisfy him ? There is no possibility of doubting in any such cases. And it seems not more difficult to determine in the present case.

Were the question ; what that perception is, which we have of number, diversity, causation or proportion ; and whether our ideas of them signify truth and reality perceived by the understanding, or impressions made by the objects to which we ascribe them, on our minds ; were, I say, this the question ; would it not be sufficient to appeal to every man's consciousness ?—These perceptions seem to me to have no greater pretence to be denominated perceptions of the understanding, than right and wrong.

611 It is true, some impressions of pleasure or pain, satisfaction or disgust, generally attend our perceptions of virtue and vice. But these are merely their effects and concomitants, and not the perceptions themselves, which ought no more to be confounded with them, than a particular truth (like that for which Pythagoras offered a Hecatomb) ought to be confounded with the pleasure that may attend the discovery of it. Some emotion or other accompanies, perhaps, all our perceptions : but more remarkably our perceptions of right and wrong. And this, as will be again observed in the next chapter, is what has led to the mistake of making them to signify nothing but impressions, which error some have extended to all objects of knowledge ; and thus have been led into an extravagant and monstrous scepticism.

612 But to return ; let any one compare the ideas arising from

our powers of sensation, with those arising from our intuition of the natures of things, and enquire which of them his ideas of right and wrong most resemble. On the issue of such a comparison may we safely rest this question. It is scarcely conceivable that any one can impartially attend to the nature of his own perceptions, and determine that, when he thinks gratitude or beneficence to be right, he perceives nothing true of them, and understands nothing, but only receives an impression from a sense. Was it possible for a person to question, whether his idea of equality was gained from sense or intelligence ; he might soon be convinced, by considering, whether he is not sure, that certain lines or figures are really equal, and that their equality must be perceived by all minds, as soon as the objects themselves are perceived.—In the same manner may we satisfy ourselves concerning the origin of the idea of right: For have we not a like consciousness, that we discern the one, as well as the other, in certain objects? Upon what possible grounds can we pronounce the one to be sense, and the other reason? Would not a Being purely intelligent, having happiness within his reach, approve of securing it for himself? Would not he think this right; and would it not be right? When we contemplate the happiness of a species, or of a world, and pronounce concerning the actions of reasonable beings which promote it, that they are right ; is this judging erroneously? Or is it no determination of judgment at all, but a species of mental taste?—Are not such actions really right? Or is every apprehension of rectitude in them false and delusive, just as the like apprehension is concerning the effects of external and internal sensation, when taken to belong to the causes producing them?

613 It seems beyond contradiction certain, that every being must desire happiness for himself ; and can those natures of things, from which the desire of happiness and aversion to misery necessarily arise, leave, at the same time, a rational nature totally indifferent as to any approbation of actions

procuring the one, or preventing the other? Is there nothing that any understanding can perceive to be amiss in a creature's bringing upon himself, or others, calamities and ruin? Is there nothing truly wrong in the absolute and eternal misery of an innocent being?—‘It appears wrong to us.’—And what reason can you have for doubting, whether it appears what it is?—Should a being, after being flattered with hopes of bliss, and having his expectations raised by encouragements and promises, find himself, without reason, plunged into irretrievable torments; would he not justly complain? Would he want a sense to cause the idea of wrong to arise in his mind?—Can goodness, gratitude, and veracity, appear to any mind under the same characters, with cruelty, ingratitude, and treachery?—Darkness may as soon appear to be light.

614 It would, I doubt, be to little purpose to plead further here, the natural and universal apprehensions of mankind, that our ideas of right and wrong belong to the understanding, and denote real characters of actions; because it will be easy to reply, that they have a like opinion of the sensible qualities of bodies; and that nothing is more common than for men to mistake their own sensations for the properties of the objects producing them, or to apply to the object itself, what they find always accompanying it, whenever observed. Let it therefore be observed,

615 Thirdly, That if right and wrong denote effects of sensation, it must imply the greatest absurdity to suppose them applicable to actions: That is; the ideas of right and wrong and of action, must in this case be incompatible; as much so, as the idea of pleasure and a regular form, or of pain and the collisions of bodies.—All sensations, as such, are modes of consciousness, or feelings of a sentient being, which must be of a nature totally different from the particular causes which produce them. A coloured body, if we speak accurately, is the same absurdity with a square sound. We need no experiments to prove that heat, cold, colours, tastes, &c. are not real qualities of bodies;

because the ideas of matter and of these qualities are incompatible.—But is there indeed any such incompatibility between actions and right ? Or any such absurdity in affirming the one of the other ?—Are the ideas of them as different as the idea of a sensation, and its cause ?

616 On the contrary ; the more we enquire, the more indisputable, I imagine, it will appear to us, that we express necessary truth, when we say of some actions, they are right ; and of others, they are wrong. Some of the most careful enquirers think thus, and find it out of their power not to be persuaded that these are real distinctions belonging to the natures of actions. Can it be so difficult, to distinguish between the ideas of sensibility and reason ; between the intuitions of truth and the passions of the mind ? Is that a scheme of morals we can be very fond of, which makes our perceptions of moral good and evil in actions and manners, to be all vision and fancy ? Who can help seeing, that right and wrong are as absolutely unintelligible, and void of sense and meaning, when supposed to signify nothing true of actions, no essential, inherent difference between them, as the perceptions of the external and internal senses are, when thought to be properties of the objects that produce them ?

617 How strange would it be to maintain, that there is no possibility of mistaking with respect to right and wrong¹ ; that the apprehensions of all beings, on this subject, are alike just, since all sensation must be alike true sensation ?—Is there a greater absurdity, than to suppose, that the moral rectitude of an action is nothing absolute and unvarying ; but capable, like all the modifications of pleasure and pain, of being intended and remitted, of increasing and lessening, of rising and sinking with the force and liveliness of our feelings ? Would it be less ridiculous to suppose this of the relations

¹ It will be observed presently, that the ancient sceptics asserted universally there could be no such thing as error ; and for the very reason here assigned.

between given quantities, of the equality of numbers, or the figure of bodies?

618 In the last place; let it be considered, that all actions, undoubtedly, have a nature. That is, some character certainly belongs to them, and somewhat there is to be truly affirmed of them. This may be, that some of them are right, others wrong. But if this is not allowed; if no actions are, in themselves, either right or wrong, or any thing of a moral and obligatory nature, which can be an object to the understanding; it follows, that, in themselves, they are all indifferent. This is what is essentially true of them, and this is what all understandings, that perceive right, must perceive them to be. But are we not conscious, that we perceive the contrary? And have we not as much reason to believe the contrary, as to believe or trust at all our own discernment?

619 In other words; every thing having a nature or essence, from whence such and such truths concerning it necessarily result, and which it is the proper province of the understanding to perceive; it follows, that nothing whatever can be exempted from its inspection and sentence, and that of every thought, sentiment, and subject, it is the natural and ultimate judge. Actions, therefore, ends and events are within its province. Of these, as well as all other objects, it belongs to it to judge.—What is this judgment?—One would think it impossible for any person, without some hesitation and reluctance, to reply; that the judgment he forms of them is this; that they are all essentially indifferent, and that there is no one thing fitter to be done than another. If this judging truly; how obvious is it to infer, that it signifies not what we do; and that the determination to think otherwise, is an imposition upon rational creatures. Why then should they not labour to suppress in themselves this determination, and to extirpate from their natures all the delusive ideas of morality, worth, and virtue? What though the ruin of the world should follow?—There would be nothing really wrong in this.

620 A rational agent void of all moral judgment, incapable of perceiving a difference, in respect of fitness and unfitness to be performed, between actions, and acting from blind propensions without any sentiments concerning what he does, is not possible to be imagined. And, do what we will, we shall find it out of our power, in earnest to persuade ourselves, that reason can have no concern in judging of and directing our conduct ; or to exclude from our minds all notions of right and wrong in actions.

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In short ; it seems sufficient to overthrow any scheme, that such consequences, as the following, should arise from it :— That no one being can judge one end to be better than another, or believe a real moral difference between actions ; without giving his assent to an impossibility ; without mistaking the affections of his own mind for truth, and sensation for knowledge.—That there being nothing intrinsically proper or improper, just or unjust ; there is nothing obligatory¹ ; but all beings enjoy, from the reasons of things and the nature of actions, liberty to act as they will.

621 The following important corollary arises from these arguments :

That morality is eternal and immutable.

Right and wrong, it appears, denote what actions are. Now whatever any thing is, that it is, not by will, or decree, or power, but by nature and necessity. Whatever a triangle or circle is, that it is unchangeably and eternally. It depends upon no will or power, whether the three angles of a triangle and two right ones shall be equal ; whether the periphery of a circle and its diameter shall be incommensurable ; or whether matter shall be divisible, moveable, passive, and inert.

¹ Moral right and wrong, and moral obligation or duty, must remain, or vanish together. They necessarily accompany one another, and make but as it were one idea. As far as the former are fictitious and imaginary, the latter must be so too. This connexion or coincidence between moral rectitude and obligation will be at large considered hereafter.

Every object of the understanding has an indivisible and invariable essence ; from whence arise its properties, and numberless truths concerning it. Omnipotence does not consist in a power to alter the nature of things, and to destroy necessary truth (for this is contradictory, and would infer the destruction of all wisdom, and knowledge) but in an absolute command over all particular, external existences, to create or destroy them, or produce any possible changes among them.—The natures of things then being immutable ; whatever we suppose the natures of actions to be, they must be immutably. If they are indifferent, this indifference is itself immutable, and there neither is nor can be any one thing that, in reality, we ought to do rather than another. The same is to be said of right and wrong, of moral good and evil, as far as they express real characters of actions. They must immutably and necessarily belong to those actions of which they are truly affirmed.

622 No will, therefore, can render any thing good and obligatory, which was not so antecedently, and from eternity ; or any action right, that is not so in itself ; meaning by action, not the bare external effect produced, but the ultimate principle of conduct, or the determination of a reasonable being, considered as arising from the perception of some motives and reasons and intended for some end. According to this sense of the word action, whenever the principle from which we act is different, the action is different, though the external effects produced may be the same. If we attend to this, the meaning and truth of what I have just observed will be easily seen.—Put the case of any action, the performance of which is indifferent, or attended with no circumstances of the agent that render it better or fitter to be done than omitted. Is it not plain that, while all things continue the same, it is as impossible for any will or power to make acting obligatory here, as it is for them to make two equal things unequal without producing any change in either ? It is true, the doing

of any indifferent thing may become obligatory, in consequence of a command from a being possessed of rightful authority over us: But it is obvious, that in this case, the command produces a change in the circumstances of the agent, and that what, in consequence of it, becomes obligatory, is not the same with what before was indifferent. The external effect, that is, the matter of the action is indeed the same; but nothing is plainer, than that actions in this sense the same, may in a moral view be totally different according to the ends aimed at by them, and the principles of morality under which they fall.

623 When an action, otherwise indifferent, becomes obligatory, by being made the subject of a promise; we are not to imagine, that our own will or breath alters the nature of things by making what is indifferent not so. But what was indifferent before the promise is still so; and it cannot be supposed, that, after the promise, it becomes obligatory, without a contradiction. All that the promise does, is, to alter the connexion of a particular effect; or to cause that to be an instance of right conduct which was not so before. There are no effects producible by us, which may not, in this manner, fall under different principles of morality; acquire connexions sometimes with happiness, and sometimes with misery; and thus stand in different relations to the eternal rules of duty.

624 The objection, therefore, to what is here asserted, taken from the effects of positive laws and promises, has no weight. It appears, that when an obligation to particular indifferent actions arises from the command of the Deity, or positive laws; it is by no means to be inferred from hence, that obligation is the creature of will, or that the nature of what is indifferent is changed: nothing then becoming obligatory, which was not so from eternity; that is, obeying the divine will, and just authority. And had there been nothing right in this, had there been no reason from the natures of things for obeying God's will; it is certain, it could have induced no obligation, nor at all influenced an intellectual nature as such.

—Will and laws signify nothing, abstracted from something previous to them, in the character of the law-giver and the relations of beings to one another, to give them force and render disobedience a crime. If mere will ever obliged, what reason can be given, why the will of one being should oblige, and of another not ; why it should not oblige alike to every thing it requires ; and why there should be any difference between power and authority ? It is truth and reason, then, that, in all cases, oblige, and not mere will. So far, we see, is it from being possible, that any will or laws should create right ; that they can have no effect, but in virtue of natural and antecedent right.

625 Thus, then, is morality fixed on an immovable basis, and appears not to be, in any sense, factitious ; or the arbitrary production of any power human or divine ; but equally everlasting and necessary with all truth and reason. And this we find to be as evident, as that right and wrong signify a reality in what is so denominated.

626 I shall conclude this chapter, with observing ; that the opinion of those, who maintain that our ideas of morality are derived from sense, is far from being entirely modern. There were among the antients philosophers, (Protagoras, in particular, and his followers) who entertained a like opinion ; but extended it much further ; that is, to all science ; denied all absolute and immutable truth ; and asserted every thing to be relative to perception. And indeed it seems not a very unnatural transition, from denying absolute moral truth, to denying all truth ; from making right and wrong, just and unjust, dependent on perception, to asserting the same of whatever we commonly rank among the objects of the understanding. Why may not he who rejects the reality of rightness in beneficence, and of wrong in producing needless misery, be led, by the same steps, to deny the certainty of other self-evident principles ? Why may he not as well deny the reality, for example, of straitness in a line drawn the shortest way

between two points ; or of aptness and unaptness, of connexion and proportion between certain objects and quantities ? He that distrusts his reason in the one case, why should he not also in the other ? He that refers the former perceptions to a sense ; why should he not, with the before-mentioned philosopher, make all knowledge to be sense ?

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627 Such is the agreement, in this instance, between the opinions of modern times and those of Socrates's time. Such the tendency of the account of morality I have opposed ; and it is astonishing how far some, who have embraced it, have extended it to our other perceptions, and revived, perhaps even exceeded, the wildest doctrines of ancient scepticism. The primary as well as secondary qualities of matter, cause, effect, connexion, extension, duration, identity, and almost all about which knowledge is conversant, have been represented as only qualities of our minds : the idea confounded with its object : The *esse* and the *percipi* maintained to be universally the same ; and the impossibility asserted of every thing except impressions. Thus, is there neither matter, nor morality, nor Deity, nor any kind of external existence left. All our discoveries and boasted knowledge vanish, and the whole universe is reduced into a creature of fancy. Every sentiment of every being is equally just. Nothing being present to our minds besides our own ideas, there can be no conception of any thing distinct from them ; no beings but¹ ourselves ; no distinction between past and

¹ Nor ourselves neither ; for to exist, and to be perceived, being the same, perceptions themselves can have no existence, unless there can be perceptions of perceptions in infinitum. Besides, by this system, the only idea of what we call ourselves is the contradictory and monstrous one of a series of successive and separable perceptions, not one of which continues, that is, exists at all ; and without any substance that perceives.—It might be further remarked ; that the very scheme that takes away the distinction between past and future, and admits of no real existence independent of perception, is itself derived from and founded upon the supposition of the contrary ; I mean, the supposition that there have been past impressions, of which all ideas are copies ; and that certain objects have been observed to

future time; no possibility of remembering wrong, or foreseeing wrong. He is the wisest man, who has the most fertile imagination, and whose mind is stored with the greatest number of notions, their conformity to the truth of things being incapable of being questioned.—When speculative men have proceeded to these lengths, or avow principles directly implying them, it becomes high time to leave them to themselves.

CHAPTER II.—OF OUR IDEAS OF THE BEAUTY AND DEFORMITY OF ACTIONS.

628 HAVING considered our ideas of right and wrong; I come now to consider our ideas of beauty, and its contrary.

This is the second kind of sentiment, or perception, with respect to actions, which I noticed at the beginning of the preceding chapter. Little need be said to shew, that it is different from the former. We are plainly conscious of more than the bare discernment of right and wrong, or the cool judgement of reason concerning the natures of actions. We often say of some actions, not only that they are right, but that they are amiable; and of others, not only that they are wrong, but odious and shocking. Every one must see, that these epithets denote the delight; or on the contrary, the horror and detestation felt by ourselves; and, consequently, signify not any real qualities or characters of actions, but the effects in us, or the particular pleasure and pain, attending the consideration of them.

629 ‘What then is the true account of these perceptions? must

have been conjoined in past instances, and by this means produced that customary transition of the imagination from one of them to the other, in which reasoning is said to consist. It would have been abusing the reader to mention these extravagancies, had not some of them been started by Bishop Berkeley; and his principles adopted and pursued to a system of scepticism, that plainly includes them all, by another writer of the greatest talents, to whom I have often had occasion to refer. See *Treatise of Human Nature*, and *Philosophical Essays*, by Mr. Hume.

they not arise entirely from an arbitrary structure of our minds, by which certain objects, when observed, are rendered the occasions of certain sensations and affections? And therefore, in this instance, are we not under a necessity of recurring to a sense? Can there be any connexion, except such as arises from implanted principles, between any perceptions and particular modifications of pleasure and pain in the perceiving mind?'

I answer; That there may be such a connexion; and that I think, there is such a connexion in many instances; and particularly in this instance.

630 Why or how the impressions made by external objects on our bodily organs, produce the sensations constantly attending them, it is not possible for us to discover. The same is true of the sensations and affections of mind produced by the objects of many of the internal senses. In such instances, we can conceive of no connexion between the effects in us and their apparent causes; and the only account we can give is, that 'such is our frame; so God has seen fit to adapt our faculties and particular objects to one another.' But this is far from being true universally. There are objects which have a natural aptitude to please or displease our minds. And thus in the spiritual world, the case is the same, as in the corporeal; where, though there are events which we cannot explain, and numberless causes and effects of which, for want of being acquainted with the inward structure and constitution of bodies, we know no more than their existence: There are also causes the manner of whose operation we understand; and events, between which we discern a necessary connexion.

631 One account, therefore, of the sentiments we are examining, is; 'that such are the natures of certain actions, that, when perceived, there must result certain emotions and affections.'

That there are objects which have a natural aptitude to please or offend, and between which and the contemplating mind there is a necessary congruity or incongruity, seems to

me unquestionable.—For, what shall we say of supreme and complete excellence? Is what we mean by this only a particular kind of sensation; or, if something real and objective, can it be contemplated without emotion? Must there be the aid of a sense to make the character of the Deity appear amiable; or, would pure and abstract reason be indifferent to it? Is there any thing more necessary to cause it to be loved and admired besides knowing it? The more it is known, and the better it is understood, must it not the more delight?

Again, a reasonable being, void of all superadded determinations or senses, who knows what order and happiness are, would, I think, unavoidably, receive pleasure from the survey of an universe where perfect order prevailed; and the contrary prospect of universal confusion and misery would offend him.

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632 What is thus true, in these and other instances, is particularly evident in the present case. It is not indeed plainer, that, in any instances, there are correspondencies and connexions of things among themselves; or that one motion has a tendency to produce another; than it is, that virtue is naturally adapted to please every observing mind; and vice the contrary.

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633 To return therefore from this digression. The observations now made will not account for all our feelings and affections with respect to virtue and vice. Our intellectual faculties are in their infancy. The lowest degrees of reason are sufficient to discover moral distinctions in general; because these are self-evident, and included in the ideas of certain actions and characters. They must, therefore, appear to all who are capable of making actions the objects of their reflexion. But the extent to which they appear, and the accuracy and force with which they are discerned; and, consequently, their influence, must, so far as they are the objects of pure intelligence, be in proportion to the strength and improvement

of the rational faculties of beings and their acquaintance with truth and the natures of things.

634 From hence, it must appear, that in men it is necessary that the rational principle, or the intellectual discernment of right and wrong, should be aided by instinctive determinations.—The dictates of mere reason, being slow, and deliberate, would be otherwise much too weak. The condition in which we are placed, renders many urgent passions necessary for us ; and these cannot but often interfere with our sentiments of rectitude. Reason alone, (imperfect as it is in us) is by no means sufficient to defend us against the danger to which, in such circumstances, we are exposed. Our Maker has, therefore, wisely provided remedies for its imperfections ; and established a due balance in our frame by annexing to our intellectual perceptions sensations and instincts, which give them greater weight and force.

In short. The truth seems to be that, ‘in contemplating the actions of moral agents, we have both a perception of the understanding, and a feeling of the heart ; and that the latter, or the effects in us accompanying our moral perceptions, depend on two causes. Partly, on the positive constitution of our natures : But principally on the essential congruity or incongruity between moral ideas and our intellectual faculties.’

635 It may be difficult to determine the precise limits between these two sources of our mental feelings ; and to say, how far the effects of the one are blended with those of the other. It is undoubted, that we should have felt and acted otherwise than we now do, if the decisions of reason had been left entirely without support ; nor is it easy to imagine how pernicious to us this would have proved. On this account it cannot be doubted, but that both the causes I have mentioned unite their influence : And the great question in morality is, not whether we owe much to implanted senses and determinations ; but whether we owe all to them.

636 It was, probably, in consequence of not duly considering

the difference I have now insisted on between the honestum and pulchrum (the δίκαιον and καλόν;) or of not carefully distinguishing between the discernment of the mind, and the sensations attending it in our moral perceptions; that the Author of the Enquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue, was led to derive all our ideas of virtue from an implanted sense. Moral good and evil, he every where describes, by the effects accompanying the perception of them. The rectitude of an action is, with him, the same with its gratefulness to the observer; and wrong, the contrary. But what can be more evident, than that right and pleasure, wrong and pain, are as different as a cause and its effect; what is understood, and what is felt; absolute truth, and its agreeableness to the mind.—Let it be granted, as undoubtedly it must, that some degree of pleasure is inseparable from the observation of virtuous actions¹: It is just as unreasonable to infer from hence, that the discernment of virtue is nothing distinct from the reception of this pleasure; as it would be to infer, as some have done, that solidity, extension, and figure are only particular modes of sensation; because attended, whenever they are perceived, with some sensations of sight or touch, and impossible to be conceived by the imagination without them.

637 An able writer on these subjects, tells us that, after some² doubts, he at last satisfied himself, that all beauty, whether natural or moral, is a species of absolute truth; as resulting from, or consisting in, the necessary relations and congruities of ideas. It is not easy to say what this means. Natural beauty will be considered presently. And as to moral beauty, one would think, that the meaning must be, that it denotes a real quality of certain actions. But the word beauty seems always to refer to the reception of pleasure; and the beauty, therefore, of an action or character, must signify its being

¹ The virtue of an action, Mr. Hume says, is its pleasing us after a particular manner. *Treatise of Human Nature*, Vol. iii.

² See Mr. Balguy's *Tracts on the Foundation of Moral Goodness*.

such as pleases us, or has an aptness to please when perceived: Nor can it be just to conceive more in the action itself, or to affirm more of it, than this aptness, or that objective goodness or rectitude on which it depends. Beauty and loveliness are synonymous; but an object self-lovely can only mean an object, by its nature, fitted to engage love.

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638 I have already noticed the opinion that natural beauty is a real quality of objects,—It seems impossible for any one to conceive the objects themselves to be endowed with more than a particular order of parts, and with powers, or an affinity to our perceptive faculties, thence arising; and, if we call this beauty, then it is an absolute, inherent quality of certain objects; and equally existent whether any mind discerns it or not. But, surely, order and regularity are, more properly, the causes of beauty than beauty itself.

It may be farther worth the reader's consideration, how far the account given of the pleasures received from the contemplation of moral good and of natural beauty may be applied to the pleasures received from many other sources; as the approbation of our fellow-creatures, greatness of objects, discovery of truth and increase of knowledge.

639 I will only add, than in such enquiries as these, we are necessarily led to consider the nature and origin of our notions of perfection and excellency.

Those who think there is no distinction, in point of real objective excellence and worth, between actions and characters, may be expected to fly to a sense to account for any preference we give in our ideas to any objects¹. We have ideas of

¹ We have the ideas of greater decency and dignity in some pleasures than in others; as, in the pleasures of the imagination or the understanding, when compared with those of the bodily senses. Dr. Hutcheson, after observing this, seems uncertain whether it ought to be ascribed to a constant opinion of innocence in the former pleasures; which would reduce the preference we give them, as he says, to the moral sense; or whether there be not in these cases a different sort of perceptions to be reckoned another class of sensations. See *Treatise of the Passions*, Sect. 1. Art. 1.

different degrees of perfection in different objects ; but, upon this scheme, they are all an illusion. The whole compass and possibility of being is, to the eye of right reason, in this respect entirely on a level. The very notion of intrinsic excellence, self-worth and different degrees of objective perfection and imperfection, implies an impossibility and contradiction.—How can it be possible for any person to acquiesce in such an opinion? When we conceive of an intelligent being as a more noble and perfect nature than a clod of earth ; do we then err? Is it owing to an implanted power, that we make such a distinction ; or that, in particular, we give the preference in our esteem to the divine nature, as surpassing infinitely in excellence and dignity all other natures? The truth is ; these, like the other ideas taken notice of in the preceding chapter, are ideas of the understanding. They are derived from the cognizance it takes of the comparative essences of things ; and arise necessarily in our minds upon considering certain objects and qualities because they denote not what we feel, but what such objects and qualities are.

640 There is in nature an infinite variety of existences and objects, which we as unavoidably conceive endowed with various degrees of perfection, as we conceive of them at all, or consider them as different. It is not possible to contemplate and compare dead matter and life ; brutality and reason ; misery and happiness ; virtue and vice ; ignorance and knowledge ; impotence and power ; the deity and inferior beings ; without acquiring the ideas of better and worse ; perfect and imperfect ; noble and ignoble ; excellent and base.—The first remove from nothing is unwrought matter. Next above this is vegetative life ; from whence we ascend to sensitive and animal life, and from thence to happy and active intelligence ; which admits of an infinite variety of degrees, and of different orders and classes of beings, rising without end, above one another. Every successive advance

of our thoughts in this gradation, conveys the notion of higher and higher excellence and worth; till at last we arrive at uncreated and complete excellence. If this is not intellectual perception, but sensation merely; then may all nature as it now stands in our ideas be reversed; and the dust we tread be conceived to possess supreme excellence, as justly and truly as now the contrary is conceived.

641 I am pleased to find an excellent writer expressing fully my sentiments on this subject¹. ‘We cannot (says he) avoid observing, that of things which occur to our thoughts, the idea of superior excellence accompanies some upon a comparison with others. As the external senses distinguish between pleasant and painful in their objects, and the internal sense perceives a difference between the beautiful and the deformed; so the understanding not only separates truth from falsehood, but discerns a dignity in some beings and some qualities beyond others. It is not possible for a man to consider inanimate nature and life, the brutal and the rational powers, or virtue and vice, with a perfect indifference, or without preferring one before the other in his esteem. And the idea of a difference in the degrees of their perfection, as necessarily arises in his mind, as that of a difference in their being.’

CHAPTER III.—OF THE ORIGIN OF OUR DESIRES AND AFFECTIONS.

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642 As all moral approbation and disapprobation, and our ideas of beauty and deformity, have been ascribed to an internal sense; meaning by this, not ‘any inward power of perception,’ but ‘an implanted power, different from reason;’ so, all our desires and affections have, in like manner, been ascribed to instinct, meaning by instinct, not merely ‘the immediate desire of an object,’ but ‘the reason of this desire; or an

¹ See Mr. Abernethy’s Sermons, Vol. II. p. 219.

implanted propensity.'—The former opinion I have already at large examined. I am now to examine the latter.

'Is then all desire to be considered as wholly instinctive? Is it, in particular, owing to nothing but an original bias given our natures, which they might have either wanted or have received in a contrary direction; that we are at all concerned for our own good, or for the good of others?'

643 As far as this enquiry relates to private good, we may without hesitation answer in the negative. The desire of happiness for ourselves, certainly arises not from instinct. The full and adequate account of it, is, the nature of happiness. It is impossible, but that creatures capable of pleasant and painful sensations, should love and chuse the one, and dislike and avoid the other. No being, who knows what happiness and misery are, can be supposed indifferent to them, without a plain contradiction. Pain is not a possible object of desire; nor happiness, of aversion. No power whatsoever can cause a creature, in the agonies of torture and misery, to be pleased with his state, to like it for itself, or to wish to remain so. Nor can any power cause a creature rejoicing in bliss to dislike his state, or be afraid of its continuance. Then only can this happen, when pain can be agreeable, and pleasure disagreeable; that is, when pain can be pleasure; and pleasure, pain.

644 From hence I infer, that it is by no means, in general, an absurd method of explaining our affections, to derive them from the natures of things and of beings. For thus without doubt we are to account for one of the most important and active of all our affections. To the preference and desire of private happiness by all beings, nothing more is requisite than to know what it is.—'And may not this be true, likewise, of public happiness? May not benevolence be essential to intelligent beings, as well as self-love to sensible beings?'

645 But to enter a little more minutely into the discussion of this point. Let us, again, put the case of a being purely reasonable. It is evident, that (though by supposition void

of implanted byasses) he would not want all principles of action, and all inclinations. It has been shewn he would perceive Virtue, and possess affection to it, in proportion to the degree of his knowledge. The nature of happiness also would engage him to chuse and desire it for himself. And is it credible that, at the same time, he would be necessarily indifferent about it for others? Can it be supposed to have that in it, which would determine him to seek it for himself; and yet to have nothing in it, which could engage him to approve of it for others? Would the nature of things, upon this supposition, be consistent? Would he not be capable of seeing, that the happiness of others is to them as important as his is to him; and that it is in itself equally valuable and desirable, whoever possesses it?

Let us again enquire; would not this being assent to this proposition; ‘happiness is better than misery’?—A definition has been asked of the word better here. With equal reason might a definition be asked of the word greater. when the whole is affirmed to be greater than a part. Both denote simple ideas, and both truth. The one, what happiness is, compared with misery; and the other, what the whole is, compared with a part. And a mind that should think happiness not to be better than misery, would mistake as grossly, as a mind that should believe the whole not to be greater than a part. It cannot therefore be reasonably doubted, but that such a being, upon a comparison of happiness and misery, would as unavoidably as he perceives their difference, prefer the one to the other; and chuse the one rather than the other, for his fellow-beings.

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646 It is confessed, that, in our inward sentiments, we are determined to make a distinction between publick happiness and misery; and to apprehend a preferableness of the one to the other. But it is asserted, that this is owing to our frame; that it arises from senses and instincts given us, and

not from the nature of happiness and misery.—But why is this asserted? It may be owing to the latter cause. The instance of self-love demonstrates this.—Let any thing equivalent be offered to prove the contrary.

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647 The desire of knowledge also, and the preference of Truth, must arise in every intelligent mind. Truth is the proper object of mind, as light is of the eye, or harmony of the ear. To this it is, by its nature, fitted, and upon this depends its existence; there being no idea possible of mind, or understanding, without something to be understood. Truth and Science are of infinite extent; and it is not conceivable, that the understanding can be indifferent to them; that it should want inclination to search into them; that its progress, in the discovery of them, should be attended with no satisfaction; or that, with the prospect before it of unbounded scope for improvement and endless acquisitions, it should be capable of being equally contented with error, darkness, and ignorance.

Why, therefore, reasonable beings love truth, knowledge, and honour, is to be answered in the same manner with the enquiry, why they love and desire happiness?

648 In the method now pursued, we might go on to give a particular explication of the causes and grounds of the various sentiments of veneration, awe, love, wonder, esteem, &c. produced within us by the contemplation of certain objects. As some objects are adapted to please, and as others necessarily excite desire; so almost every different object has a different effect on our minds, according to its different nature and qualities. And these emotions, or impressions, are almost as different and various, as the objects themselves of our consideration. Why should we scruple ascribing them to a necessary correspondence between them and their respective objects?—It cannot be true, that, antecedently to arbitrary constitution, any affections of our minds are equally and indifferently applicable to any objects and qualities: Nor

can any one assert this, without going so far as to deny all real connexion between causes and effects.

649 But it must not be forgotten, that, in men, the sentiments and tendencies of our intelligent nature are, in a great degree, mingled with the effects of arbitrary constitution. It is necessary this observation, before insisted on, should be here called to mind. Rational and dispassionate benevolence would, in us, be a principle much too weak, and utterly insufficient for the purposes of our present state. And the same is true of our other rational principles and desires.

650 And this, perhaps, will afford us a good reason for distinguishing between affections and passions. The former, which we apply indiscriminately to all reasonable beings, may most properly signify the desires founded in the reasonable nature itself, and essential to it ; such as self-love, benevolence, and the love of truth.—These, when strengthened by instinctive determinations, take the latter denomination ; or are, properly, passions.—Those tendencies within us that are merely instinctive, such as hunger, thirst, &c., we commonly call appetites or passions indifferently, but seldom or never affections.

651 I cannot help, in this place, stepping aside a little to take notice of an opinion already referred to ; I mean, the opinion of those who will allow of no ultimate object of desire besides private good. What has led to this opinion has been inattention to the difference between desire, and the pleasure implied in the gratification of it. The latter is subsequent to the former, and founded in it : That is, an object, such as fame, knowledge, or the welfare of a friend, is desired, not because we foresee that when obtained, it will give us pleasure ; but, *vice versa* ; obtaining it gives us pleasure, because we previously desired it or had an affection carrying us to it and resting in it. And, were there no such affections, the very foundations of happiness would be destroyed. It cannot be conceived, that obtaining what we do not desire, should be the cause of pleasure to us ; or that what we are perfectly indifferent

to, and is not the end of any affection, should, upon being possessed, be the means of any kind of gratification¹.

652 Besides ; if every object of desire is considered—merely as the cause of pleasure ; one would think, that, antecedently to experience, no one object could be desired more than another : and that the first time we contemplated fame, knowledge, or the happiness of others ; or had any of the objects of our natural passions and desires proposed to us, we must have been absolutely indifferent to them, and remained so, till, by some means, we were convinced of the connexion between them and pleasure.

653 For farther satisfaction on this point, nothing can be more proper than to consider ; whether, supposing we could enjoy the same pleasure without the object of our desire, we should be indifferent to it. Could we enjoy pleasures equivalent to those attending knowledge, or the approbation of others, without them, or with infamy and ignorance, would we no longer wish for the one or be averse to the other ? Would a person lose all curiosity, and be indifferent whether he stirred a step to gratify it, were he assured he should receive equal sensations of pleasure by staying where he is ? Did you believe, that the prosperity of your nearest kindred, your friends or your country, would be the means of no greater happiness to you, than their misery ; would you lose all love to them, and all desires of their good ?—Would you not chuse to enjoy the same quantity of pleasure with virtue, rather than without it ?—An unbiassed mind must spurn at such enquiries ; and any one, who would, in this manner, examine himself, might easily find, that all his affections and appetites (self-love itself excepted) are, in their nature, disinterested ; and that, though the seat of them be self, and the effect of them the gratification of self, their direct tendency is always to some

¹ ‘The very idea of happiness or enjoyment, (as Dr. Butler says) is this, an appetite or affection having its object.’ See Sermons preached at the Rolls’ chapel.

particular object different from private pleasure, beyond which they carry not our view. So far is it from being true, that, in following their impulses, we aim at nothing but our own interest ; that we continually feel them drawing us astray from what we know to be our interest ; and may observe men every day carried by them to actions and pursuits, which they acknowledge to be ruinous to them.

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CHAPTER IV.—OF OUR IDEAS OF GOOD AND ILL DESERT.

654 IT is needless to say any thing to shew that the ideas of good and ill desert necessarily arise in us upon considering certain actions and characters ; or, that we conceive virtue as always worthy, and vice as the contrary. These ideas are plainly a species of the ideas of right and wrong. There is, however, the following difference between them, which may be worth mentioning. The epithets, right and wrong, are, with strict propriety, applied only to actions ; but good and ill desert belong rather to the agent. It is the agent alone, that is capable of happiness or misery ; and, therefore, it is he alone that properly can be said to deserve these.

I apprehend no great difficulty in explaining these ideas. They suppose virtue practised, or neglected ; and regard the treatment due to beings in consequence of this. They signify the propriety which there is in making virtuous agents happy, and in discountenancing the vicious. When we say, a man deserves well, we mean, that his character is such, that we approve of shewing him favour ; or that it is right he should be happier than if he had been of a contrary character. We cannot but love a virtuous agent, and desire his happiness above that of others. Reason determines at once, that he ought to be the better for his virtue.

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655 Different characters require different treatment. Virtue affords a reason for communicating happiness to the agent.

Vice is a reason for withdrawing favour, and for punishing.—This seems to be very intelligible. But in order farther to explain this point, it is necessary to observe particularly, that the whole foundation of the sentiments now mentioned is by no means this; ‘the tendency of virtue to the happiness of the world, and of vice to its misery; or the publick utility of the one, and perniciousness of the other.’—We have an immediate approbation of making the virtuous happy, and discouraging the vicious, abstracted from all consequences. Were there but two beings in the universe, one of whom was virtuous, the other vicious; or, were we to conceive two such beings, in other respects alike, governed apart from the rest of the world, and removed for ever from the notice of all other creatures; we should still approve of a different treatment of them. That the good being should be less happy, or a greater sufferer, than his evil fellow being, would appear to us wrong.

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656 The moral worth or merit of an agent, then, is, ‘his virtue considered as implying the fitness, that good should be communicated to him preferably to others; and as disposing all observers to esteem, and love him, and study his happiness.’—Virtue naturally, and of itself, recommends to favour and happiness, qualifies for them, and renders the being possessed of it the proper object of encouragement and reward. It is, in a like sense, we say that a person, who has been a benefactor to another, deserves well of him; that benefits received ought to be acknowledged and recompensed; and, that the person who bestows them is, preferably to others, the proper object of our regard and benevolence.

657 I deny not, but that one circumstance of great importance, upon which is grounded the fitness of countenancing virtue and discountenancing vice among reasonable beings, is, the manifest tendency of this to prevent misery, and to preserve order and happiness in the world. What I assert is, that it is not all that renders such a procedure right; but that,

setting aside the consideration of publick interest, it would still remain right to make a distinction between the lots of the virtuous and vicious. Vice is of essential demerit; and virtue is in itself rewardable.

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- 658 In the case of a single, solitary evil being, it may perhaps be very true, that the only thing that could justify putting him into a state of absolute misery, would be its conduciveness to his reformation. But the reason why we approve of using methods to accomplish his reformation, is not merely this; 'that it is expedient to his happiness.' For were this true, it would, in a moral view, be indifferent whether he was made happy in consequence of being punished and thus reformed, or in consequence of such an extraordinary communication of advantages as should counter-act and over-balance any sufferings necessarily occasioned by his vices. Can we equally approve these opposite methods of treating such a being? Supposing the same quantity of happiness enjoyed, is it indifferent whether a being enjoys it in a course of wickedness, or of virtue?—It would be extravagant to assert, that there is no possible method whereby a being can, in any degree, escape the hurtful effects of his vices, or lose the beneficial effects of his virtue. We see enough in the present world to convince us of the contrary.

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CHAPTER V.—OF THE RELATION OF MORALITY TO THE DIVINE NATURE; THE RECTITUDE OF OUR FACULTIES; AND THE GROUNDS OF BELIEF.

- 659 MORALITY has been represented as necessary and immutable. There is an objection to this, which to some has appeared of considerable weight, and which it will be proper to examine.

It may seem 'that this is setting up something distinct from God, which is independent of him, and equally eternal and necessary.'

It is easy to see that this difficulty affects morality no more than it does all truth. If for this reason, we must give up the unalterable natures of right and wrong, and make them dependent on the Divine will; we must, for the same reason, give up all necessary truth, and assert the possibility of contradictions.

What I have hitherto aimed at has been, to prove that morality is a branch of necessary truth, and that it has the same foundation with it. If this is acknowledged, the main point I contend for is granted, and I shall be very willing that truth and morality should stand and fall together. This subject however cannot be pursued far enough, and morality traced to its source, without entering into the consideration of the difficulty now proposed; which naturally occurs in all enquiries of this sort.

660 In the first place, therefore, let it be observed, that something there certainly is which we must allow not to be dependent on the will of God. For instance; this will itself; his own existence; his eternity and immensity; the difference between power and impotence, wisdom and folly, truth and falsehood, existence and non-existence.

To suppose these dependent on his will, is so extravagant, that no one can assert it. It would imply, that he is a changeable and precarious being, and render it impossible for us to form any consistent ideas of his existence and attributes. But these must be the creatures of will, if all truth be so.—There is another view of this notion, which shews that it overthrows the Divine attributes and existence. For,

661 Secondly, Mind supposes truth; and intelligence, something intelligible. Wisdom supposes certain objects about which it is conversant; and knowledge, knowables.—An eternal, necessary mind supposes eternal, necessary truth; and infinite knowledge, infinite knowables. If then there were no infinity of knowables; no eternal, necessary, independent¹ truths;

¹ *'Αίδια οντά*, in Plato's language.

there could be no infinite, independent necessary mind or intelligence; because there would be nothing to be certainly and eternally known. Just as, if there were nothing possible, there could be no power; or, if there were no necessary infinity of possibles, there could be no necessary, infinite power; because power supposes objects, and eternal, necessary, infinite power, an infinity of eternal and necessary possibles.

662 In like manner it may be said, that if there were no moral distinctions, there could be no moral attributes in the Deity. If there were nothing eternally and unalterably right and wrong, there could be nothing meant by his eternal, unalterable rectitude or holiness.—It is evident, therefore, that annihilating truth, possibility, or moral differences, is indeed annihilating all mind, all power, all goodness; and that so far as we make the former precarious, dependent, or limited; so far we make the latter so too.

663 Hence we see clearly, that to conceive of truth as depending on God's will, is to conceive of his intelligence and knowledge as depending on his will. And is it possible, that any one can think this as reasonable, as, on the contrary, to conceive of his will (which, from the nature of it, requires something to guide and determine it) as dependent on and regulated by his understanding?—What can be more preposterous, than to make the Deity nothing but will; and to exalt this on the ruins of all his attributes?

664 But it may still be urged, that these observations remove not the difficulty; but rather strengthen it. We are still left to conceive of 'certain objects, distinct from Deity, which are necessary and independent; and on which too his existence and attributes are founded; and without which, we cannot so much as form any idea of them.' I answer; we ought to distinguish between the will of God and his nature. It by no means follows, because they are independent of his will, that they are also independent of his nature. To conceive thus of them would indeed involve us in the greatest inconsistencies.

Wherever, or in whatever objects, necessity and infinity occur to our thoughts, the divine, eternal nature is to be acknowledged.

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665 Let it be remembered here, that in necessary truth, is included the comparative natures of happiness and misery; the right in producing the one, and the wrong in producing the other; and, in general, moral truth, moral fitness and excellence, and all that is best to be done in all cases, and with respect to all the variety of actual or possible beings and worlds.—This is the necessary goodness of the divine nature.—It demonstrates, that, in the divine intelligence, absolute rectitude is included; and that eternal, infinite power and reason are in essential conjunction with, and imply complete, moral excellence, and particularly perfect and boundless Benevolence. It shews us, that whenever we transgress truth and right, we immediately affront that God who is truth and right; and that, on the contrary, whenever we determine ourselves agreeably to them, we pay immediate homage to him.

666 From the whole it is plain, that none have reason to be offended, when morality is represented as eternal and immutable; for it appears that it is only saying that God himself is eternal and immutable, and making his nature the high and sacred original of virtue, and the sole fountain of all that is true and good and perfect.

The same kind of reasoning with some that I have here used has been, by Dr. Clark, applied, (and I think justly) to space and duration: But these sentiments are more particularly countenanced by Dr. Cudworth, who, at the end of his Treatise on Eternal and immutable Morality, has considered the same difficulty, and given a like answer to it.

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667 I shall conclude this chapter with a few observations on the general grounds of belief and assent. These may be all comprehended under the three following heads.

The first is immediate consciousness or feeling. It is

absurd to ask a reason for our believing what we feel, or are inwardly conscious of. A thinking being must necessarily have a capacity of discovering some things in this way. It is from hence particularly we acquire the knowledge of our own existence, and of the several operations, passions, and sensations of our minds. And it is also under this head I would comprehend the information we derive from our powers of recollection or memory.

668 The second ground of belief is intuition ; by which I mean the mind's survey of its own ideas, and the relations between them, and the notice it takes of what is or is not true and false, consistent and inconsistent, possible and impossible in the natures of things. It is to this, as has been explained at large in the first chapter, we owe our belief of all self-evident truths ; our ideas of the general, abstract affections and relations of things ; our moral ideas, and whatsoever else we discover, without making use of any process of reasoning.—It is on this power of intuition, essential, in some degree or other, to all rational minds, that the whole possibility of all reasoning is founded. To it the last appeal is ever made. Many of its perceptions are capable, by attention, of being rendered more clear ; and many of the truths discovered by it, may be illustrated by an advantageous representation of them, or by being viewed in particular lights ; but seldom will admit of proper proof.—Some truths there must be, which can appear only by their own light, and which are incapable of proof ; otherwise nothing could be proved, or known ; in the same manner as, if there were no letters, there could be no words, or if there were no simple or undefinable ideas, there could be no complex ideas.—I might mention many instances of truths discernible no other way than intuitively, which learned men have strangely confounded and obscured, by supposing them subjects of reasoning and deduction. One of the most important instances, the subject of this treatise affords us ; and another we have, in our notions of the necessity of a cause of

whatever begins to exist, and our general ideas of power and connexion¹: And, sometimes, reason has been ridiculously employed to prove even our own existence.

369 The third ground of belief is argumentation or deduction. This we have recourse to when intuition fails us; and it is, as just now hinted, highly necessary, that we carefully distinguish between these two, mark their differences and limits, and observe what information we owe to the one or the other of them.—Our ideas are such, that, by comparing them amongst themselves, we can find out numberless truths concerning them, and, consequently, concerning actually existent objects, as far as correspondent to them, which would be otherwise undiscoverable. Thus, a particular relation between two ideas, which cannot be discerned by any immediate comparison, may appear, to the greatest satisfaction, by the help of a proper, intermediate idea, whose relation to each is either self-evident, or made out by some precedent reasoning.

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It would be needless to give any instances of knowledge derived from Argumentation. All is to be ascribed to it, which we have not received from either of the preceding sources.

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CHAPTER VI.—OF FITNESS, AND MORAL OBLIGATION, AND THE VARIOUS FORMS OF EXPRESSION, WHICH HAVE BEEN USED BY DIFFERENT WRITERS IN EXPLAINING MORALITY.

670 AFTER the account has been given of the nature and origin of our ideas of morality; it will be easy to perceive the meaning of several terms and phrases, which are commonly used in speaking on this subject.

Fitness and unfitness most frequently denote the congruity

¹ See the second section of the first chapter.

or incongruity, aptitude or inaptitude of any means to accomplish an end. But when applied to actions, they generally signify the same with right and wrong ; nor is it often hard to determine in which of these senses these words are to be understood. It is worth observing, that fitness, in the former sense, is equally undefinable with fitness in the latter ; or, that it is as impossible to express, in any other than synonymous words, what we mean, when we say of certain objects, ‘that they have a fitness to one another ; or are fit to answer certain purposes,’ as it is when we say, ‘reverencing the Deity is fit, or beneficence is fit to be practised.’ In the first of these instances, none can avoid owning the absurdity of making an arbitrary sense the source of the idea of fitness, and of concluding that it signifies nothing real in objects, and that no one thing can be properly the means of another. In both cases the term fit, signifies a simple perception of the understanding.

Morally good and evil, reasonable and unreasonable, are epithets also commonly applied to actions, evidently meaning the same with right and wrong, fit and unfit.

Approving an action is the same with discerning it to be right ; as assenting to a proposition is the same with discerning it to be true.

671 But Obligation is the term most necessary to be here considered ; and to the explication of it, the best part of this chapter shall be devoted.

Obligation to action, and rightness of action, are plainly coincident and identical ; so far so, that we cannot form a notion of the one, without taking in the other. This may appear to any one upon considering, whether he can point out any difference between what is right, meet or fit to be done, and what ought to be done. It is not indeed plainer, that figure implies something figured, solidity resistence, or an effect a cause, than it is that rightness implies oughtness (if I may be allowed this word) or obligatoriness. And as easily

can we conceive of figure without extension, or motion without a change of place, as that it can be fit for us to do an action, and yet that it may not be what we should do, what it is our duty to do, or what we are under an obligation to do.—Right, fit, ought, should, duty, obligation, convey, then, ideas necessarily including one another. From hence it follows,

- 72 First, That virtue, as such, has a real obligatory power antecedently to all positive laws, and independently of all will; for obligation, we see, is involved in the very nature of it. To affirm, that the performance of that, which, to omit, would be wrong, is not obligatory, unless conducive to private good or enjoined by a superior power, is a manifest contradiction. It is to say, that it is not true, that a thing is what it is; or that we are obliged to do what we ought to do; unless it be the object of a command, or, in some manner, privately useful.—If there are any actions fit to be done by an agent, besides such as tend to his own happiness, those actions, by the terms, are obligatory, independently of their influence on his happiness.—Whatever it is wrong to do, that it is our duty not to do, whether enjoined or not by any positive law¹.—I cannot conceive of any thing much more evident than this.—It appears, therefore, that those who maintain that all obligation is to be deduced from positive laws, the Divine will, or self-love, assert what (if they mean any thing contrary to what is here said) implies, that the words right and just stand for no real and distinct characters of actions; but signify merely what is willed and commanded, or conducive to private advantage, whatever that be; so that any thing may be both right and wrong, morally good and evil, at the same time and in any circumstances, as

¹ It is obvious, that this is very different from saying (what it would be plainly absurd to say) that every action, the performance of which in certain circumstances is wrong, will continue wrong, let the circumstances be ever so much altered, or by whatever authority it is commanded.

it may be commanded or forbidden by different laws and wills ; and any the most pernicious effects will become just, and fit to be produced by any being, if but the smallest degree of clear advantage or pleasure may result to him from them.

673 Those who say, nothing can oblige but the will of God, generally resolve the power of this to oblige to the annexed rewards and punishments. And thus, in reality, they subvert entirely the independent natures of moral good and evil ; and are forced to maintain, that nothing can oblige, but the prospect of pleasure to be obtained, or pain to be avoided. If this be true, it follows that vice is, properly, no more than imprudence ; that nothing is right or wrong, just or unjust, any farther than it affects self-interest ; and that a being, independently and completely happy, cannot have any moral perceptions. The justness of these inferences cannot be denied by one, who will attend to the coincidence here insisted on between obligation and virtue.

674 But to pursue this point farther ; let me ask, would a person who either believes there is no God, or that he does not concern himself with human affairs, feel no moral obligations, and therefore not be at all accountable ? Would one, who should happen not to be convinced, that virtue tends to his happiness here or hereafter, be released from every bond of duty and morality ? Or, would he, if he believed no future state, and that, in any instance, virtue was against his present interest, be truly obliged, in these instances, to be wicked ? —These consequences must follow, if obligation depends entirely on the knowledge of the will of a superior, or on the connexion between actions and private interest.—But, indeed, the very expression, virtue tends to our happiness, and the supposition that, in certain cases, it may be inconsistent with it, imply that it may exist independently of any connexion with private interest ; and would have no sense, if it signified only the relation of actions to private interest. For then,

to suppose virtue to be inconsistent with our happiness, would be the same with supposing, that what is advantageous to us, may be disadvantageous to us.

675 It is strange to find those who plead for self-interest, as the only ground of moral obligation, asserting that, when virtue clashes with present enjoyments, all motives to it cease, supposing no future state. For, upon their principles, the truth is not, that all motives to practice virtue, would, in these circumstances, cease, but that virtue itself would cease; nay, would be changed into vice; and what would otherwise have been fit and just, become unlawful and wrong: For, being under an obligation in these circumstances not to do what appeared to us fit, it could not in reality be fit; we could not do it without violating our duty, and therefore certainly, not without doing wrong. Thus, all who find not their present account in virtue, would, upon these principles (setting aside another world) be under an obligation to be wicked. Or, to speak more properly, the subject-matter of virtue and vice (that is, the relation of particular actions to private good) would be altered; what was before wickedness would become virtue, and what was before virtue would become wickedness.—It should be carefully minded that, as far as another world creates obligation, it creates virtue; for it is an absurdity too gross to be maintained, that we may act contrary to our obligations, and yet act virtuously.

676 Another observation worthy our notice in this place, is, that rewards and punishments suppose, in the very idea of them, moral obligation, and are founded upon it. They do not make it, but enforce it. They are the sanctions of virtue, and not its efficient. A reward supposes something done to deserve it, or a conformity to obligation subsisting previously to it; and punishment is always inflicted on account of some breach of obligation. Were we under no obligations, antecedently to the proposal of rewards and punishments, it would be a contradiction to suppose us

subjects capable of them.—A person without any light besides that of nature, and supposed ignorant of a future state of rewards and punishments and the will of the Deity, might discover these by reasoning from his natural notions of morality and duty. But were the latter dependent on the former, and not *vice versa*; this could not be said, nor should we have any principles left, from which to learn the will of the Deity, and the conditions of his favour to us.

677 Secondly, From the account given of obligation, it follows that rectitude is a law as well as a rule to us; that it not only directs, but binds all, as far as it is perceived.—With respect to its being a rule, we may observe, that a rule of action signifying some measure or standard to which we are to conform our actions, or some information we possess concerning what we ought to do, there can, in this sense, be no other rule of action; all besides, to which this name can be properly given, implying it, or signifying only helps to the discovery of it. To perceive or to be informed how it is right to act, is the very notion of a direction to act. And it must be added, that it is such a direction as implies authority, and which we cannot disregard or neglect without remorse and pain. Reason is the guide, the natural and authoritative guide of a rational being. Where he has no discernment of right and wrong, there, and there only, is he (morally speaking) free. But where he has this discernment, where moral good appears to him, and he cannot avoid pronouncing concerning an action, that it is fit to be done, and evil to omit it; here he is tied in the most strict and absolute manner, in bonds that no power in nature can dissolve, and from which he can at no time, or in any single instance, break loose, without offering the most unnatural violence to himself; without making an inroad into his own soul, and immediately pronouncing his own sentence,

678 That is properly a law to us, which we always and unavoidably feel and own ourselves obliged to obey; and which, as

we obey or disobey it, is attended with the immediate sanctions of inward triumph and self-applause, or of inward shame and self-reproach, together with the secret apprehensions of the favour or displeasure of a superior righteous power, and the anticipations of future rewards, and punishments.—That has proper authority over us, to which, if we refuse submission, we transgress our duty, incur guilt, and expose ourselves to just vengeance. All this is certainly true of our moral judgment, and contained in the idea of it.

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679 Thirdly, From the account given of obligation, it appears how absurd it is to enquire, what obliges us to practise virtue? as if obligation was no part of the idea of virtue, but something adventitious and foreign to it; that is, as if what was due, might not be our duty, or what was wrong, unlawful; or as if it might not be true, that what it is fit to do we ought to do, and that what we ought to do, we are obliged to do.—To ask, why are we obliged to practise virtue, to abstain from what is wicked, or perform what is just, is the very same as to ask, why we are obliged to do what we are obliged to do?—It is not possible to avoid wondering at those, who have so unaccountably embarrassed themselves, on a subject that one would think was attended with no difficulty; and who, because they cannot find any thing in virtue and duty themselves, which can induce us to pay a regard to them in our practice, fly to self-love, and maintain that from hence alone are derived all inducement and obligation.

680 Fourthly, From what has been observed, it may appear, in what sense obligation is ascribed to God. It is no more than ascribing to him the perception of rectitude, or saying, that there are certain ends, and certain measures in the administration of the world, which he approves, and which are better to be pursued than others.—Great care, however, should be taken, what language we here use. Obligation is a word to which many persons have affixed several ideas, which should

by no means be retained when we speak of God. Our language and our conceptions, whenever he is the subject of them, are always extremely defective and inadequate, and often very erroneous.—There are many who think it absurd and shocking to attribute any thing of obligation or law to a being who is necessarily sufficient and independent, and to whom nothing can be prior or superior. How, I conceive, we are to frame our apprehensions on this subject, has already, in some measure, appeared. It should, methinks, be enough to satisfy such persons, that the obligations ascribed to the Deity arise entirely from and exist in his own nature ; and that the eternal, unchangeable law, by which it has been said, he is directed in all his actions, is no other than himself ; his own infinite, eternal, all perfect understanding.

681 Fifthly, What has been said also shews us, on what the obligations of religion and the Divine will are founded. They are plainly branches of universal rectitude. Our obligation to obey God's will means nothing, but that obedience is due to it, or that it is right and fit to comply with it. What an absurdity is it then, to make obligation subsequent to the Divine will, and the creature of it ? For why, upon this supposition, does not all will oblige equally ? If there be any thing which gives the preference to one will above another ; that, by the terms, is moral rectitude. What would any laws or will of any being signify, what influence could they have on the determinations of a moral agent, was there no good reason for complying with them, no obligation to regard them, no antecedent right of command ?—

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682 Farther, what has been said will shew us, what judgment to form concerning several accounts and definitions, which have been given of obligation. It is easy here to perceive the perplexity arising from attempting to define words expressing simple perceptions of the mind.—An ingenious and

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able writer¹ defines obligation to be a state of the mind into which it is brought by perceiving a reason for action. Let this definition be substituted wherever the words duty, should, obliged, occur ; and it will soon be seen how defective it is. The meaning of it is plainly, that obligation denotes that attraction or excitement which the mind feels upon perceiving right and wrong. But this is the effect of obligation perceived, rather than obligation itself. Besides, it is proper to say, that the duty or obligation to act is a reason for acting ; and then this definition will stand thus : obligation is a state of the mind into which it is brought by perceiving obligation to act.—This author divides obligation into external and internal ; by the former, meaning the excitement we feel to pursue pleasure as sensible agents ; and, by the latter, the excitement we feel to pursue virtue as reasonable and moral agents. But, as merely sensible beings, we are incapable of obligation ; otherwise it might be properly applied to brutes, which, I think, it never is. What, in these instances, produces confusion, is not distinguishing between perception and the effect of it ; between obligation and a motive. All motives are not obligations : though the contrary is true, that wherever there is obligation, there is also a motive to action.—Some perhaps, by obligation, may only mean such a motive to act, as shall have the greatest influence, and be most likely to determine us, and as far as this is all that is intended, it may be allowed, that the obligation to practise virtue depends greatly, as mankind are now situated, on its connexion with private interest, and the views of future rewards and punishments.

633 Obligation has, by several writers, been styled, the necessity of doing a thing in order to be happy². I have already taken

¹ Mr. Balguy. See his tracts on the foundation of moral goodness and the law of truth.

² ‘The whole force of obligation (says Bishop Cumberland in his treatise of the laws of nature, chap. v. sect. ii.) is this, that the legislator hath annexed to the observance of his laws, good, to the transgression evil ;

sufficient notice of the opinion from which this definition is derived ; and therefore shall here only ask, what, if this be the only sense of obligation, is meant when we say, a man is obliged to study his own happiness ? Is it not obvious that obliged, in this proposition, signifies, not the necessity of doing a thing in order to be happy, which would make it ridiculous ; but only, that it is right to study our own happiness, and wrong to neglect it ?

684 A very learned author¹ maintains, that moral obligation always denotes some object of will and law, or implies some obliger. Were this true ; it would be mere jargon to mention our being obliged to obey the Divine will ; and yet, this is as proper language as any we can use. But his meaning seems to be, that the word obligation signifies only the particular fitness of obeying the Divine will, and cannot properly be applied to any other fitness ; which is restraining the sense of the word, in a manner which the common use of it by no means warrants.

685 The sense of obligation given by Dr. Hutcheson², agrees in some measure, with the account here given of it. Then, he says, a person is obliged to an action, when every spectator, or he himself, upon reflexion, must approve his action and disapprove omitting it. This account, however, is not perfectly accurate ; for though obligation to act, and reflex approbation and disapprobation do, in one³ sense, always

and those natural : In prospect whereof men are moved to perform actions, rather agreeing than disagreeing with the laws.'—Ibid. sect. 27. I think that moral obligation may be thus universally and properly defined. Obligation is that act of a legislator, by which he declares that actions conformable to his law are necessary to those for whom the law is made. An action is then understood to be necessary to a rational agent, when it is certainly one of the causes necessarily required to that happiness, which he naturally and consequently necessarily desires.'—Again, sect. xxxv. 'I cannot conceive any thing which could bind the mind of man with any necessity (in which Justinian's definition places the force of obligation) except arguments proving, that good or evil will proceed from our actions.'

¹ See Dr. Warburton's *Divine Legation*, Vol. I. page 50.

² *Illustrations on the Moral Sense.* Sect. 1.

³ The reason of adding this restriction is this. A man may, through

accompany and imply one another ; yet they seem as different as an act and an object of the mind, or as perception and the truth perceived. It is not exactly the same to say, it is our duty to do a thing ; and to say, we approve of doing it. The one is the quality of the action, the other the discernment of that quality. Yet, such is the connexion between these, that it is not very necessary to distinguish them ; and, in common language, the term obligation often stands for the sense and judgment of the mind concerning what is fit or unfit to be done. It would, nevertheless, I imagine, prevent some confusion, and keep our ideas more distinct and clear, to remember, that a man's consciousness that an action ought to be done, or the judgment concerning obligation and inducing or inferring it, cannot, properly speaking, be obligation itself ; and that, however variously and loosely this word may be used, its primary and original signification coincides with rectitude¹.

686 I shall leave the reader to judge how far these remarks are applicable to what Dr. Clarke says on this head, who gives much the same account of obligation with that last mentioned : and some of whose words it may not be amiss to quote. See

involuntary error, approve of doing what he ought not to do, or think that to be his duty, which is really contrary to it ; and yet it is too, in this case, really his duty to act agreeably to his judgment.—There are then two views of obligation, which, if not attended to, will be apt to produce confusion.—In one sense, a man's being obliged to act in a particular manner depends on his knowing it ; and in another sense, it does not. Was not the former true, we might be contracting guilt, when acting with the fullest approbation of our consciences : And was not the latter true, it would not be sense ever to speak of shewing another what his obligations are, or how it is incumbent upon him to act.—This entirely coincides with the distinction of virtue into absolute and relative, hereafter to be explained, Chap. VIII.

¹ I observe that Dr. Adams, in an excellent Sermon on the *Nature and Obligation of Virtue*, agrees with me in the account he gives of obligation.—To the question, in what does the obligation to virtue and right action consist ? he answers, ‘that right implies duty in its idea : that to perceive an action to be right, is to see a reason for doing it in the action itself, abstracted from all other considerations whatsoever ; and that this perception, this acknowledged rectitude in the action, is the very essence of obligation, that which commands the approbation and choice, and binds the conscience of every rational being.’

his *Evidences of Natural and revealed Religion*, page 43, 6th Edit. ‘The judgment and conscience of a man’s own mind, concerning the reasonableness and fitness of the thing, that his actions should be conformed to such or such a rule or law, is the truest and formallest obligation, even more properly and strictly so, than any opinion whatsoever, of the authority of the giver of a law, or any regard he may have to its sanctions by rewards and punishments; for whoever acts contrary to this sense and conscience of his own mind, is necessarily self-condemned; and the greatest and strongest of all obligations, is that which a man cannot break through without condemning himself.—The original obligation of all is the eternal reason of things; that reason which God himself, who has no superior to direct him, and to whose happiness nothing can be added, nor any thing diminished from it, yet constantly obliges himself to govern the world by.—So far, therefore, as men are conscious of what is right and wrong, so far they are under an obligation to act accordingly; and, consequently, that eternal rule of right which I have been hitherto describing, it is evident, ought as indispensably to govern men’s actions, as it cannot but necessarily determine their assent.’ Page 51, he says, ‘The minds of men cannot but acknowledge the reasonableness and fitness of their governing all their actions by the rule of right or equity: And this assent is a formal obligation upon every man actually and constantly to conform himself to that rule.’

687 Dr. Butler, likewise, in his Sermons on *Human Nature*, and the explanatory remarks upon them in the Preface, insists strongly on the obligation implied in reflex approbation; the supremacy belonging to the principle of reflexion within us; and the authority and right of superintendency which are constituent parts of the idea of it. From this incomparable writer, I beg leave to borrow one observation more of considerable importance, on this subject.

‘Every being endowed with reason, and conscious of right

and wrong, is, as such, necessarily a law to himself¹: It follows, therefore, that the greatest degree of ignorance or scepticism possible, with respect to the tendencies of virtue, the authority of the Deity, a future state, and the rewards and punishments to be expected in it, leaves us still truly and fully accountable, guilty, and punishable, if we transgress this law: and will, by no means, exempt us from justice, or be of any avail to excuse or save us, should it prove that such authority and future state really exist. For what makes an agent ill-deserving is not any opinion he may have about a superior power, or positive sanctions; but his doing wrong, and acting contrary to the conviction of his mind. ‘What renders obnoxious to punishment, is not the fore-knowledge of it, but merely violating a known obligation.’

688 There is an objection to what has been now said of obligation, which deserves to be considered².—It may be asked, ‘Are there not many actions, of which it cannot be said, that we are bound to perform them, which yet are right to be performed: and the actual performance of which appears to us even more amiable, than if they had been strictly our duty: such as requital of good for evil, and acts of generosity and kindness?’

I answer, that allowing this, the most that can follow from it is, not that rectitude does not imply obligation, but that it does not imply it absolutely and universally, or so far as that there can be no sense in which actions are denominated right, which does not carry in it obligation. The nature of rectitude may vary, according to the objects or actions to which it is ascribed. All right actions are not so in precisely the same sense; and it might, with little prejudice to what is above asserted, be granted, that some things are right in such a sense as yet not to be our indispensable duty. But then

¹ I have not here copied Dr. Butler, but given the sense of his observations in other words. See the *Preface* to his sermons.

² See *Essays on the Principles of Morality and natural Religion*. Part I. Essay ii. Chap. 3.

let it be remembered: That it holds universally and uncontestedly, that whatever is right in such a sense, as that the omission of it would be wrong, is always and indispensably obligatory. And, in the next place, that though the idea of rightness may be more general than that of fitness, duty, or obligation; so that there may be instances to which we apply the one, but not the other; yet this cannot be said of wrong. The idea of this, and of obligation, are certainly of the same extent; I mean, that though there may be cases in which it cannot be said, that what we approve as right, ought to have been done; yet there are no cases in which it cannot be said, that what is wrong to be done, or omitted, ought not to be done or omitted.

689 But, not to dwell on this: It will be found on careful enquiry that the objection now mentioned does not require any such restrictions of what has been advanced as at first sight, may appear to be necessary; and the following observations will, perhaps, shew this.

In the first place, Beneficence, in general, is undoubtedly a duty; and it is only with respect to the particular acts and instances of it that we are at liberty. A certain person, suppose, performs an act of kindness to another: We say, he might not have done it, or he was not obliged to do it; that is, he was not obliged to do this particular kind act. But to be kind in some instances or other; to do all the good he can to his fellow-creatures, every one is obliged; and we necessarily look upon that person as blame-worthy and guilty who aims not at this; but contents himself with barely abstaining from injury and mischief.

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690 Again; the precise limits of some general duties cannot be determined by us. No one can tell exactly to what degree he ought to be beneficent, and how far he is obliged to exert himself for the benefit of other men. No person, for instance, can determine accurately, how far, in many cases,

his own good ought to give way to that of another, what number of distressed persons he ought to relieve, or what portion precisely of his fortune he ought to lay out in charity, or of his time and labour in direct endeavours to serve the publick.

In order to form a judgment in these cases, there are so many particulars to be considered in our own circumstances and abilities, and in the state of mankind and the world, that we cannot but be in some uncertainty. There are indeed degrees of defect and excess, which we easily and certainly see to be wrong : But there is a great variety of intermediate degrees, concerning which we cannot absolutely pronounce, that one of them rather than another ought to be chosen.—The same is true of the general duty of worshipping God.

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Whenever any degree of beneficence, or any particular circumstances and frequency of divine worship, or any behaviour in any possible instances, appear, all things considered, best ; they become obligatory. It is impossible to put a case, in which we shall not be obliged to conform ourselves to the right of it, whatever that is. Even what, at any time, or in any circumstances, is, upon the whole, only more proper to be done, ought then to be done ; and to suppose the contrary, would be to take away the whole sense and meaning of such an assertion.

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691 Having now given, what appears to me, the true account of the nature and foundation of moral good and evil and of moral obligation, I will add, as a supplement to this chapter, an examination of some of the forms of expression, which several eminent writers have used on this subject.

The meaning and design of these expressions will appear, after considering, that all actions being necessarily right, indifferent, or wrong ; what determines which of these an action should be accounted is the truth of the case ; or the

relations and circumstances of the agent and the objects. In certain relations there is a certain conduct right. There are certain manners of behaviour which we unavoidably approve, as soon as these relations are known. Change the relations, and a different manner of behaviour becomes right. Nothing is clearer than that what is due or undue, proper or improper to be done, must vary according to the different natures and circumstances of beings. If a particular treatment of one nature is right ; it is impossible that the same treatment of a different nature, or of all natures, should be right.

692 From hence arose the expressions, acting suitably to the natures of things ; treating things as they are ; conformity to truth ; agreement and disagreement, congruity and incongruity between actions and relations. These expressions are of no use, and have little meaning, if considered as intended to define virtue ; for they evidently presuppose it. Treating an object as being what it is, is treating it as it is right such an object should be treated. Conforming ourselves to truth means the same with conforming ourselves to the true state and relations we are in ; which is the same with doing what such a state and such relations require, or what is right in them. In given circumstances, there is something peculiar and determinate best to be done ; which, when these circumstances cease, ceases with them, and other obligations arise. This naturally leads us to speak of suiting actions to circumstances, natures, and characters ; and of the agreement and repugnancy between them. Nor, when thus considered, is there any thing in such ways of speaking, not proper and intelligible. But, at the same time, it is very obvious, that they are only different phrases for right and wrong ; and it is to be wished that those who have made use of them had attended more to this, and avoided the ambiguity and confusion arising from seeming to deny an immediate perception of morality without any deductions of reasoning ;

and from attempting to give definitions of words which admit not of them. Were any one to define pleasure, to be the agreement between a faculty and its object ; what instruction would such a definition convey ? Would it be amiss to ask, what this agreement is ; and whether any thing be meant by it, different from the pleasure itself, which the object is fitted to produce by its influence on the faculty ?

693 It is well known that Mr. Wollaston, in a work which has obtained great and just reputation, places the whole notion of moral good and evil in signifying and denying truth. Supposing his meaning to be, that all virtue and vice may be reduced to these particular instances of them ; nothing can be more plain, than that it leaves the nature and origin of our ideas of them as much as ever undetermined : For it acquaints us not, whence our ideas of right in observing truth and wrong in violating it, arise ; but supposes these to be perceptions of self-evident truths, as indeed they are, but not more so, than our ideas of the other principles of morality.—The evil of ingratitude and cruelty is not the same with that of denying truth, or affirming a lie : Nor can the formal ratio and notion of it (as Mr. Wollaston speaks) be justly said to consist in this ; because there may be no intention to deny any thing true, or to produce an assent to any thing false. Ingratitude and cruelty would be wrong, though there were no rational creatures in the world besides the agent, and though he could have no design to declare a falsehood ; which is a quite distinct species of evil.—A person, who neglects the worship due to God, may have no thought of denying his existence, or of conveying any such opinion to others. It is true, he acts as if he did not exist, that is, in a manner which nothing else can justify, or which, upon any other supposition, is inexcuseable ; and therefore, figuratively speaking, may be said to contradict truth, and to declare himself to be self-originated and self-sufficient¹.

¹ How plain is it here, that the very thing that gives ground for the application of this language in this instance, is our perceiving, antecedently

It is probable, this eminent writer meant in reality but little more than this; and the language he has introduced, I would not, by any means, be thought absolutely to condemn. All I aim at, is to guard against making a wrong application of it.

694 With the same view I must add, that when virtue is said to consist in conformity to the relations of persons and things; this must not be considered as a definition of virtue, or as intended to assign a reason justifying the practice of it. Nothing can be gained by such forms of expression, when used with these intentions: And, if we will consider why it is right to conform ourselves to the relations in which persons and objects stand to us; we shall find ourselves obliged to terminate our views in a simple perception, and something ultimately approved for which no justifying reason can be assigned.—Explaining virtue by saying, that it is the conformity of our actions to reason, is yet less proper; for this conformity signifying only, that our actions are such as our reason discerns to be right; it will be no more than saying, that virtue is doing right¹.

to this application, that such a manner of acting, in such circumstances, is wrong? The same is true in all other instances: Nor, independently of this perception, could we ever know when to say, that an action affirms or denies truth. How then does such language explain and define right and wrong?

¹ To the same purpose Dr. Adams has observed, ‘That when virtue is said to consist in a conformity to truth; in acting agreeably to the truth of the case; to the reason, truth, or fitness of things; there is, if not impropriety, something of obscurity or inaccuracy in the expression; and that the only meaning of such expressions will, in all cases, be found to be this; acting according to what reason, in the present circumstances of the agent, and the relations he stands in to the objects before him, pronounces to be right.’—‘Truth’ (as he elsewhere says) ‘is a term of wider extent than right. The characters of wisdom or prudence, of skill in any art or profession, are, as well as virtue, founded in a regard to truth, and imply the acting agreeably to the nature and reason of things; yet are these ideas certainly distinct from that of goodness, or moral rectitude. The man, who builds according to the principles of geometry, acts as agreeably to truth, and he who should transgress the rules of architecture, as much violates truth, as he who acts agreeably to the duty of gratitude, or contrary to it. But, in the former of these instances, the conformity to truth is not virtue but skill: the deflection from it is not vice, but ignorance or folly.’—To these observations may be

695 It should be further considered, that neither do these forms of expression direct us to proper criteria, by which we may be enabled to judge in all cases what is morally good or evil. For if, after weighing the state and circumstances of a case, we do not perceive how it is proper to act ; it would be trifling to direct us, for this end, to consider what is agreeable to them. When, in given circumstances, we cannot determine what is right, we must be also equally unable to determine what is suitable to those circumstances. It is indeed very proper and just to direct us, in order to judge of an action, to endeavour to discover the whole truth with respect to its probable or possible consequences, the circumstances and qualifications of the object, and the relations of the agent ; for this, as was before said, is what determines its moral nature ; and no more can be intended by representing truth and relations as criteria of virtue.

696 ‘The language we are considering then expressing neither definitions nor proper criteria of virtue, of what use is it ? and what is designed by it ?’ —I answer, that it is evidently designed to shew, that morality is founded in truth and reason ; or that it is equally necessary and immutable, and perceived by the same power, with the natural proportions and essential differences of things.

‘But what, it may be again asked, is it more than bare assertion ? What proof of this does it convey ?’ In reply to this, it might be observed, that the same questions may be put to those who have maintained the contrary ; and it is, I think, necessary they should better examine this subject before they consider it, as they do, a decided point, that our ideas of morality are derived from an arbitrary sense, and not ideas of the understanding.

697 The agreement of proportion between certain quantities, is added, that to act agreeably to the character of an oppressor, or tyrant, is, in no improper sense, to act viciously ; to injure and to destroy. So vague and loose is this way of speaking, and so liable to objections, when used to define and explain virtue.

real and necessary ; and perceived by the understanding. Why should we doubt, whether the agreement of fitness also between certain actions and relations, is real and necessary, and perceived by the same faculty ? From the different natures, properties, and positions of different objects result necessarily different relative fitnesses and unfitnesses ; different productive powers ; different aptitudes to different ends, and agreements or disagreements amongst themselves. What is there absurd or exceptional in saying, likewise, that from the various relations of beings and objects, there result different moral fitnesses and unfitnesses of action ; different obligations of conduct ; which are equally real and unalterable with the former, and equally independent of our ideas and opinions ? For any particular natural objects to exist at all, and for them to exist with such and such mutual proportions, is the same. And, in like manner, for reasonable beings of particular natures and capacities to exist at all in such and such circumstances and relations, and for such and such conduct to be fit or proper is the same. And as the Author of nature, in creating the former, willed the proportions and truths implied in them to exist ; so likewise, by the very act of creating the latter, and placing them in their respective relations to one another and to himself, he willed that such and such actions should be done, and such and such duties observed.—When we compare innocence and eternal misery, the idea of unsuitableness between them arises in our minds. And from comparing together many natural objects and beings, an idea of unsuitableness, likewise, but of a totally different kind, arises within us ; that is, we perceive such a repugnancy between them, that the one cannot be made to correspond to the other ; or, that their different properties cannot co-exist in the same subject ; or, that they are not capable of producing such and such particular effects on one another. Why should one of these be taken to be less real than the other?—No one can avoid owning that he has the idea of unsuitableness ; (that is, a sentiment of wrong) in the

application of eternal misery to innocence. Let him, if he can, find out a reason for denying it to be a sentiment of his understanding, and a perception of truth.

698 To this purpose have the advocates for fitness, as the foundation of morality, argued. This, I think, has been the drift of their assertions and reasonings. It must, however, be allowed, that they have, by too lax a use of words given occasion for the objections of those who have embraced and defended the contrary opinion..

It would not be difficult to shew, how the like dispute might be raised about the original of our ideas of power and connexion, the like objections started, and the same embarrassment produced.

But it will better help to illustrate some of these remarks, and give a clearer view of the state of this controversy, if, for moral good and evil, we substitute equality and inequality, and suppose these to be the objects of enquiry. He that should derive our ideas of them from a sense, would be undoubtedly mistaken, if he meant any thing more, than that they were immediately perceived. And another, who, in opposition to this, should assert them to be founded on the natures and unalterable mutual respects and proportions of things; and to denote conformity to reason, or the agreement and disagreement, correspondency and repugnancy between different quantities; would as plainly assert the truth; though in language liable to be misunderstood, and really trifling, if designed to set aside an immediate power of perception in this case, and to define equality and inequality: Nor, in this view of such language, would any thing be more proper than to observe, how much more determinate it is to say, that the agreement between two quantities is their equality, than that their equality is the agreement between them. But how unreasonable would it be to conclude, as in the parallel case has been done, that therefore equality and inequality are perceived by an implanted sense, and not at all objects of knowledge?

CHAPTER VIII.—OF THE NATURE AND ESSENTIALS OF VIRTUE IN PRACTICE, AS DISTINGUISHED FROM ABSOLUTE VIRTUE; AND, THE PRINCIPLE OF ACTION IN A VIRTUOUS AGENT.

699 BEFORE I enter on the discussion of the principal point to be considered in this chapter, it is necessary a distinction on which what will be said is founded, and to which I have before had occasion to refer, should be distinctly explained: I mean, the distinction of virtue into abstract or absolute virtue, and practical or relative virtue.

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Abstract virtue is, most properly, a quality of the external action or event. It denotes what an action is, considered independently of the sense of the agent; or what, in itself and absolutely, it is right such an agent, in such circumstances, should do; and what, if he judged truly, he would judge he ought to do.—Practical virtue, on the contrary, has a necessary relation to, and dependence upon, the opinion of the agent concerning his actions. It signifies what he ought to do, upon supposition of his having such and such sentiments.—In a sense, not entirely different from this, good actions have been by some divided into such as are materially good, and such as are formally so.—Moral agents are liable to mistake the circumstances they are in, and, consequently, to form erroneous judgments concerning their own obligations. This supposes, that these obligations have a real existence, independent of their judgments. But, when they are in any manner mistaken, it is not to be imagined, that then nothing remains obligatory; for there is a sense in which it may be said, that what any being, in the sincerity of his heart, thinks he ought to do, he indeed ought to do, and would be justly blameable if he omitted to do, though contradictory to what, in the former sense, is his duty.—It would be trifling to object to this, that it implies, that an action may, at the same time, be

both right and wrong ; for it implies this only, as the rightness and wrongness of actions are considered in different views. A magistrate who should adjudge an estate to the person whose right it appears to be, upon a great overbalance of evidence, would certainly do right in one sense ; though, should the opposite claimant, after all, prove to be the true proprietor, he would as certainly do wrong in another sense.

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700 These different kinds of rectitude have such an affinity that we are very prone to confound them in our thoughts and discourses ; and a particular attention is necessary, in order to know when we speak of the one or the other. It is hardly possible, in writing on morality, to avoid blending them in our language, and frequently including both, even in the same sentence. But enough has been said to enable an attentive person to see when and how this is done, and to prepare the way for that explanation of the nature and essentials of practical Virtue, to which I shall now proceed.

701 What first of all offers itself here, is, that practical virtue supposes Liberty.—Whether all will acknowledge this or not, it cannot be omitted.

The liberty I here mean is the same with the power of acting and determining : And it is self-evident, that where such a power is wanting, there can be no moral capacities. As far as it is true of a being that he acts, so far he must himself be the cause of the action, and therefore not necessarily determined to act. Let any one try to put a sense on the expressions ; I will ; I act ; which is consistent with supposing, that the volition or action does not proceed from myself. Virtue supposes determination, and determination supposes a determiner ; and a determiner that determines not himself, is a palpable contradiction. Determination requires an efficient cause. If this cause is the being himself, I plead for no more. If not, then it is no longer his determination ; that is, he is no longer the determiner, but the motive, or

whatever else any one will say to be the cause of the determination. To ask, what effects our determinations, is the very same with asking who did an action, after being informed that such a one did it. In short ; who must not feel the absurdity of saying, my volitions are produced by a foreign cause, that is, are not mine ; I determine voluntarily, and yet necessarily ?— We have, in truth, the same constant and necessary consciousness of liberty, that we have that we think, chuse, will, or even exist ; and whatever to the contrary any persons may say, it is impossible for them in earnest to think they have no active, self-moving powers, and are not the causes of their own volitions, or not to ascribe to themselves, what they must be conscious they think and do.

702 But, not to enter much further into a question which has been strangely darkened by fallacious reasonings, and where there is so much danger of falling into a confusion of ideas, I would only observe, that it is hard to say what virtue and vice, commendation and blame, mean, if they do not suppose agency, free choice, and an absolute dominion over our resolutions.—It has always been the general, and it is evidently the natural sense of mankind, that they cannot be accountable for what they have no power to avoid. Nothing can be more glaringly absurd, than applauding or reproaching ourselves for what we were no more the causes of, than our own beings, and what it was no more possible for us to prevent, than the returns of the seasons, or the revolutions of the planets. The whole language of men, all their practical sentiments and schemes, and the whole frame and order of human affairs, are founded upon the notion of liberty, and are utterly inconsistent with the supposition, that nothing is made to depend on ourselves, or that our purposes and determinations are not subjected to our own command, but the result of physical laws, not possible to be resisted.

If, upon examination, any of the advocates of the doctrine of necessity should find, that what they mean by necessity

is not inconsistent with the ideas of agency and self-determination, there will be little room for farther disputes; and that liberty, which I insist upon as essential to morality, will be acknowledged; nor will it be at all necessary to take into consideration, or to pay much regard to any difficulties relating to the nature of that influence we commonly ascribe to motives.

703 Secondly, Intelligence is another requisite of practical morality. Some degree of this is necessary to the perception of moral good and evil; and without this perception, there can be no moral agency. It must not be imagined, that liberty comprehends or infers intelligence; for all the inferior orders of beings possess true liberty. Self-motion and activity, of some kind, are essential to every conscious, living being. There seems no difference between wanting all spontaneity, and being quite inanimate.—But though liberty does not suppose intelligence, yet intelligence plainly supposes liberty. For what has been now affirmed of all sensitive natures, is much more unexceptionally true of intelligent natures. A thinking, designing, reasoning being, without liberty, without any inward, spontaneous, active, self-directing principle, is what no one can frame any idea of. So unreasonable are all objections to the making of free creatures; and so absurd to ask, why men were made so. But,

704 Thirdly, The main point now to be insisted on is, ‘that an agent cannot be justly denominated virtuous, except he acts from a consciousness of rectitude, and with a regard to it as his rule and end.’ Though this observation appears to me undoubtedly true, and of the greatest importance on this subject; yet I know there are many, whose assent to it will not be easily gained; and, therefore, it will be proper that I should endeavour particularly to explain and prove it.

Liberty and Reason constitute the capacity of virtue. It is the intention that gives it actual being in a character.—The reader must not here forget the distinction before explained.

To mere theoretical virtue, or (if I may so speak) the abstract reasons and fitnesses of things, praise-worthiness is not applicable. It is the actual conformity of the wills of moral agents to what they see or believe to be the fitnesses of things, that is the object of our praise and esteem. One of these may, perhaps, very properly be called the virtue of the action, in contradistinction from the other, which may be called the virtue of the agent. To the former, no particular intention is requisite ; for what is objectively right, may be done from any motive good or bad ; and, therefore, from hence alone, no merit is communicated to the agent ; nay, it is consistent with the greatest guilt. On the contrary, to the other the particular intention is what is most essential. When this is good, there is so far virtue, whatever is true of the matter of the action ; for an agent, who does what is objectively wrong, may often be entitled to commendation.

- 705** It may possibly be of some advantage towards elucidating this matter, to conceive that only as, in strict propriety, done by a moral agent, which he intends to do. What arises beyond or contrary to his intention, however it may eventually happen, or be derived, by the connexion of natural causes, from his determination, should not be imputed to him. Our own determinations alone are, most properly, our actions. These alone we have absolute power over, and are responsible for. It is at least worth considering, in what different senses, we are said to do what we did, and what we did not design to do. The causality or efficiency implied in these cases, is certainly far from being the same.—There seems indeed scarcely any thing more evident, than that there are two views or senses, in which we commonly speak of actions. Sometimes we mean by them, the determinations or volitions themselves of a being, of which the intention is an essential part : And sometimes we mean the real event, or external effect produced. With respect to a being possessed of infinite knowledge and power, these are always coincident. What

such a being designs and determines to do, is always the same with the actual event produced. But we have no reason to think this true of any inferior beings.

706 In further explaining and proving what I have now in view, it will be proper to shew, ‘that the perception of right and wrong does excite to action, and is alone a sufficient principle of action ;’ after which we shall be better prepared for judging, ‘how far, without it, there can be practical virtue.’

Experience, and the reason of the thing, will, if we attentively consult them, soon satisfy us about the first of these points. All men continually feel, that the perception of right and wrong excites to action ; and it is so much their natural and unavoidable sense that this is true, that there are few or none, who, upon having it at first proposed to them, would not wonder at its being questioned.

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707 But further, it seems extremely evident, that excitement belongs to the very ideas of moral right and wrong, and is essentially inseparable from the apprehension of them. The account in a former chapter of obligation, is enough to shew this.—When we are conscious that an action is fit to be done, or that it ought to be done, it is not conceivable that we can remain uninfluenced, or want a motive to action. It would be to little purpose to argue much with a person, who would deny this ; or who would maintain, that the becomingness or reasonableness of an action is no reason for doing it ; and the immorality or unreasonableness of an action, no reason against doing it. An affection or inclination to rectitude cannot be separated from the view of it¹. The knowledge of what is right,

¹ Those who own, that an action may not be less right, though certain to produce no overbalance of private pleasure ; and yet assert that nothing, but the prospect of this to be obtained, can influence the will, must also maintain, that the mere rightness of an action, or the consideration that it is fit to be done, apart from the consideration of the pleasure attending or following it, would leave us quite uninclined, and indifferent to the performance or omission of it. This is so inconceivable, that those whose principles oblige them to admit it, cannot, one would think, really mean by

without any approbation of it, or concern to practise it, is not conceivable or possible. And this knowledge will certainly be attended with correspondent, actual practice, whenever there is nothing to oppose it. Why a reasonable being acts reasonably ; why he has a disposition to follow reason, and is not without aversion to wrong ; why he chuses to do what he knows he should do, and cannot be wholly indifferent, whether he abstains from that which he knows is evil and criminal, and not to be done, are questions which need not, and which deserve not to be answered.

Instincts, therefore, as before observed in other instances, are not necessary to the choice of ends. The intellectual nature is its own law. It has, within itself, a spring and guide of action which it cannot suppress or reject.

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708 It being therefore apparent that the determination of our minds concerning the nature of actions as morally good or bad, suggests a motive to do or avoid them ; it being also plain that this determination of judgment, though often not the prevailing, yet is always the first, the proper, and most natural and intimate spring and guide of the actions of reasonable beings : Let us now enquire, whether it be not further the only spring of action in a reasonable being, as far as he can be deemed morally good and worthy ; whether it be not the only principle from which all actions flow which engage our esteem of the agents ; or, in other words, whether virtue be not itself the end of a virtuous agent as such.

709 If we consider that alone as most properly done by an agent, which he designs to do, and that what was no way

right and wrong the same with the rest of mankind. That, supposing virtue to denote any thing distinct from pleasure and independent of it, it is possible to conceive, that a virtuous action may not produce an overbalance of private pleasure ; or, which answers the purpose as well, that an agent may believe this of an action to be done by him, which yet he does not the less consider as virtuous, it would be trifling to say any thing to prove : But this it is necessary those, whose opinion I have now in view, should deny.

an object of his design is not strictly imputable to him, or at least cannot give him any claim to merit or praise, it will follow that he cannot be properly said to practise virtue who does not design to practise it, to whom it is no object of regard, or who has it not at all in his view. It seems indeed as evident as we can wish any thing to be, that an action which is under no influence or direction from a moral judgment, cannot be in the practical sense moral; that when virtue is not pursued or intended, there is no virtue in the agent. Morally good intention, without any idea of moral good, is a contradiction. To act virtuously is to obey or follow reason: But can this be done without knowing and designing it?

710 I know, indeed, that according to the account some have given of virtue, it presupposes an intention in the agent different from that to itself, because, according to this account, it denotes only the emotion arising in us upon observing actions flowing from certain motives and affections, and, in the original constitution of natures, is applicable alike to actions flowing from any motives. Were this account true, it would be a gross fallacy to suppose that a sense of virtue and duty, or any regard to moral good, can ever influence to action. But this consequence cannot be regarded by one who believes not the opinion which implies it; nor is it with me a small objection to this opinion, that such a consequence arises from it.

711 If a person can justly be styled virtuous and praise worthy, when he never reflects upon virtue, and the reason of his acting is not taken from any consideration of it, intelligence certainly is not necessary to moral agency, and brutes are full as capable of virtue and moral merit as we are.—Besides, might not a person with equal reason be reckoned publick spirited, who without any view to publick good, should accidentally make a discovery that enriches his country? May not that course of behaviour be as well styled ambitious, to which the love of honour and power did not excite; or that selfish, which did

not aim at private interest; or that friendly, which was attended with no friendly intention?

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712 But it may be asked, ‘is not Benevolence a virtuous principle? And do we not approve all actions proceeding from it?’—I answer, Benevolence, it has been shewn, is of two kinds, rational and instinctive. Rational benevolence entirely coincides with rectitude, and the actions proceeding from it, with the actions proceeding from a regard to rectitude. And the same is to be said of all those affections and desires, which would arise in a nature as intelligent. It is not possible that endeavours to obtain an end which, as reasonable, we cannot but love and chuse, should not be by reason approved; or that what is necessarily desirable to all beings, should not be also necessarily right to be pursued.

But instinctive benevolence is no principle of virtue, nor are any actions flowing merely from it virtuous. As far as this influences, so far something else than reason and goodness influence, and so much I think is to be subtracted from the moral worth of any action or character. This observation agrees perfectly with the common sentiments and determinations of mankind. Wherever the influence of mere natural temper or inclination appears, and a particular conduct is known to proceed from hence, we may, it is true, love the person, as we commonly do the inferior creatures when they discover mildness and tractableness of disposition; but no regard to him as a virtuous agent will arise within us.

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713 Actions proceeding from universal, calm, and dispassionate benevolence, are by all esteemed more virtuous and amiable than actions producing equal or greater moments of good, directed to those to whom nature has more particularly linked us, and arising from kind determinations in our minds which are more confined and urgent. The reason is, that in the former case the operations of instinct have less effect, and are

less sensible, and the attention to what is morally good and right is more explicit and prevalent. Were we prompted to the acts of universal benevolence in the same manner that parents are to the care of their children, we should not conceive of them as more virtuous. These facts cannot be explained consistently with the notion, that virtue consists in acting from kind affections which cannot be derived from intelligence, and are incapable, in their immediate exercise, of being attended with any influence from it. For why then should not the virtue be greatest where the kind impulse is strongest? Why should it, on the contrary, in such a case, be least of all, and entirely vanish, when all use of reason is precluded, and nothing but the force of instinct appears? Why, in particular, should resisting our strongest instincts, and following steadily in contradiction to them¹, the determinations of cool unbiased reason, be considered as the very highest virtue? Probably, those who plead for this opinion would give it up, and acknowledge what is now asserted, could they be convinced that benevolence is essential to intelligence, and not merely an implanted principle or instinct.

All these observations may very justly be applied to self-love. Reasonable and calm self-love, as well as the love of mankind, is entirely a virtuous principle. They are both parts of the idea of virtue. Where this is greatest, there will be the most ardent and active benevolence, and likewise the greatest degree of true prudence, the highest concern about bettering ourselves to the utmost, and the most effectual and constant pursuit of private happiness and perfection, in opposition to whatever hindrances and temptations to neglect them may be thrown in our way.

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¹ More to this purpose has been said by Mr. Balguy, in his *Tract on the Foundation of Moral Goodness*.

APPENDIX

The extracts included in this Appendix are printed in the alphabetical order of the Authors' names, viz.

	PAR.
JOHN BALGUY (PT. II)	714
JOHN BROWN	737
JOHN CLARKE (OF HULL)	774
RALPH CUDWORTH	813
JOHN GAY	849
THOMAS HOBBES	888
HENRY HOME, LORD KAMES	910
JOHN LOCKE	958
BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE	1000
WILLIAM PALEY	1013
WILLIAM WOLLASTON	1023

JOHN BALGUY

The Foundation of Moral Goodness, Part II

[First edition, 1729. Reprinted here from the third edition, included in 'A Collection of Tracts Moral and Theological,' 1734.]



714 ARTICLE I. You define Reason to be a Faculty enabling us to perceive, either immediately, or mediately, the Agreement, or Disagreement of Ideas, whether Natural or Moral. This Agreement, or Disagreement, you do not suppose to be any Likeness or Unlikeness in the Ideas, but only such a Conformity as makes them concur towards the forming of some Proposition or Conclusion. Thus by the Agreement of the Ideas of the Numbers 2, 3, with that of 5, it follows that 2 and 3 are equal to 5; not for any Likeness, or Resemblance that there may be in those Ideas, but that in the Essence of those Ideas that Truth is necessarily included. I have no Objection to the Definition, taken in this Sense.

ANSWER. By that Agreement of Ideas which I make to be the Object of Reason or Intelligence, I do not mean any particular Agreement, but any, or every kind of Agreement that we are capable of discovering in our Ideas. As Ideas themselves are of various Kinds, so the Relations interceding between them are conformably different. The Agreement of Arithmetical Ideas is, I suppose, either that of Equality, or that of Proportion; and their Disagreement either that of Inequality, or Disproportion. Between the Numbers 2, 3, and that of 5, the Relation or Agreement is that of Equality. Between the Numbers 1 and 4, and 4 and 16, the Relation or Agreement is that of Proportion. And such Relations necessarily and eternally belong to such Ideas,

whether any Propositions or Conclusions be formed about them or not.

715 ART. II. But then it must be observed, that the Agreement which we find between Gratitude and Bounty, and the Disagreement of Ingratitude with Kindness received, are Expressions, which, if used with any Truth, must be taken in a quite different Meaning from that wherein they are to be understood in the Definition above.

ANS. Since Moral Ideas are very different from all others, especially Arithmetical ones, no Wonder if they exhibit different Relations. Between the ideas of Bounty and Gratitude there is a manifest Congruity, which is commonly called Moral Fitness. Whatever Terms or Expressions may be used about them, the Ideas themselves correspond, and, as it were, tally to each other with great Exactness. No disposition of Mind can possibly be thought of so suitable to the Case and Circumstance of a Person obliged, as that of Gratitude, or any Actions so just and proper, and fit, as those which flow from thence. The Ideas of Bounty and Gratitude are so closely connected, and the Agreement between them is so visible and clear, that no Man can overlook it, or be insensible of it. The most ignorant understand it, as the most vicious are forced to acknowledge it.—What is it then that knits these Ideas together, and establishes the Conformity between them? Is the Agreement arbitrary, or dependent on the Will of any Agent? No, not even the Creator's. It springs from the same Necessity of Nature that makes the Three Angles of a Triangle equal to two Right ones; or that fixes a certain Proportion between a Cone, and a Cylinder of the same Base and Height. Can then such an Equality or Proportion be ascribed to those Moral Ideas, as belongs to these Mathematical ones? Those Terms are used and applied to both Kinds, but not precisely in the same Sense. They belong originally to Ideas of Quantity; and when they are used to denote Moral Fitness, their Signification is somewhat figurative. But concerning the Meaning, or Propriety of Terms, I have no Dispute at present. However the Agreement between Moral Ideas may be denominated or distinguished, what I contend for is, that the Ideas themselves invariably bear such Relations to each other; which are no less certain, and oftentimes more immediately evident than the Equality or Proportion between the forementioned Angles and Figures.

716 ART. III. The Ideas of Bounty and Gratitude are, if you please, Moral Ideas; but no Moral Proposition can rightly be deduced from them: Or however, no such Proposition as includes any sort of Obligation. From the mere Idea of Gratitude, it will no more follow that Men ought to be grateful, than from the Idea of Ingratitude, that they ought to be ungrateful, if we suppose no Sentiment.

ANS. If Moral Ideas had no Relations belonging to them, or if these Relations were imperceptible to Human Understandings; then it might justly be said, that our Moral Ideas yielded us no Propositions. But since some of these Ideas agree, and others differ, as much at least as any other Ideas; and since these Agreements and Differences are commonly very evident to all who will attend, it follows, that Moral Ideas must needs be equally fruitful of Propositions.—The Idea of Gratitude cannot properly be said to infer any Obligation. But when a Man compares the Idea of Gratitude with that of a Benefaction received, and examines the Relation between them, he cannot avoid inferring, or concluding that he ought to be grateful. This will be farther considered under the three following Articles.

717 ART. IV. If we had otherwise no Idea of Obligation, the Ideas of Gratitude, Ingratitude, and Bounty, could never so much as afford us a general Idea of Obligation it self; or inform us what is meant by that Term; much less could we be able to deduce the particular Obligation to Gratitude from these Ideas.

ANS. If receiving of Benefits be a good Reason, as it certainly is, why the Receiver should be grateful, then it obliges him so to be. I observed in my former Papers, that the Perception of such a Reason perpetually binds all Rational Agents, and is indeed the first and highest of all Moral Obligations. The Dictates and Directions of Right Reason are the very Rule which the Deity Himself inviolably observes, and which therefore must needs affect all intelligent Creatures.—The ideas of Benefits and Obligations are so closely connected, that to do a Man a Kindness, and to oblige him, are used promiscuously, as Expressions of the same Signification.—Every Man who receives a Benefit, receives along with it a Reason for Gratitude: And that Reason he must perceive, if he be not quite thoughtless. What Instinct prompts him to, his Understanding will immediately second and confirm. His Reason will readily suggest to him

what Behaviour is due to his Benefactor, and inform him that no Actions but grateful ones, can be in any degree suitable or fit. To be injuriously, or even indifferently affected towards him, will appear as absurd, as incongruous, as contrary to the Nature of Things, as it would be for a Husbandman, after a full Crop to cover his Ground with Flints instead of Manure. No Affections, no Actions, and by Consequence, no Ideas, can possibly be more unsuitable, or mismatched, than Kindness and Ingratitude.—Moral Actions, like other Things, agree or disagree, essentially and unalterably. Hence flow those Relations and Reasons whereon Morality is founded, and which derive Obligations upon all Agents capable of perceiving them.

718 ART. V. If you will affirm, that by comparing these Ideas in your Mind, you can perceive any such Moral Proposition necessarily included, viz. that a Man ought to be grateful ; I ask, Whether you see that necessary Consequence immediately upon comparing these Ideas, or mediately by the Help of some intermediate Reasoning or Proof ? If you see such a Connection immediately, or, as it were, intuitively, I wonder every body else cannot see it. If you have any intermediate Reasonings or Proofs, pray let us have them.

ANS. That a Man ought to be grateful to his Benefactors, may be looked upon as equivalent to a self-evident Proposition. If it need any Proofs, they are so obvious and clear, that the Mind perceives them in an Instant, and immediately allows the Truth of the Proposition. Between Bounty and Gratitude there is a plain Congruity of Moral Fitness ; and between Bounty and Ingratitude a plain Incongruity, or Unfitness.—Therefore Gratitude is reasonable, and Ingratitude unreasonable.—Therefore the one ought to be observed, and the other detested. As these Conclusions appear to me incontestable, so I presume the Principle from whence they flow is strictly self-evident. Ingratitude is not only shocking to Natural Affection, but necessarily appears to the Understanding irregular, disproportioned, monstrous.—But if this Principle, and the Connection of those Conclusions with it, be so plain and evident, how happens it that they are ever called in question ? I answer, That Mens Understandings, like their Eyes, may possibly be sometimes dazled with too much Light. Doubts and Scruples have been raised, one time or other, concerning the plainest and most evident Truths in the World, even by

Philosophers and Men of Letters. But as to the Points before us, I may appeal to the general Judgment of Mankind.—Let any illiterate Man be asked these plain Questions: Is not Ingratitude to a Benefactor very unfitting?—Is it not therefore very unreasonable?—Ought it not therefore to be abhorred and avoided by every body? To each of these Questions, he will, I doubt not, without any Hesitation answer in the Affirmative. Should he be further asked, Whether he really understood these Truths? he would not only make the same Answer, but be surprised at the Question.

19 ART. VI. I know not well what you mean by this Expression, viz. That our Understandings are capable of Moral Perceptions. I believe every body agrees that in some Sense they are; that is, that the Mind is capable of receiving or forming Moral Ideas: But it will not follow from hence, that Obligation is deducible merely from our Moral Ideas, without supposing any Sentiment.

ANS. In saying that our Understandings are capable of Moral Perceptions, I mean, that they are not only capable of forming Ideas of Agents and Actions, but of perceiving likewise the Relations of Agreement and Disagreement between them. From these Relations, Obligation is plainly deducible in the Manner beforementioned. But I shall here lay it down more particularly.—I have already observed, that between such and such Agents, Actions, and Objects, naturally and necessarily intercede certain Relations of Agreement or Disagreement, Fitness or Unfitness: Conformably whereto, the same Relations are observable between their respective Ideas; which, when just, always correspond to Things themselves. For the Reality of these Relations, every Man must be referred to his own Perceptions, since they admit of no other Proof. Such Fitnesses or Unfitnesses are as manifest to our Understandings, as it is visible to our Eyes that Blue is not Green, or Scarlet, Yellow; or to our Imaginations, that a Triangle is not a Circle, or a Cone, a Cube.

The next Point to be considered, is, whether Actions thus fit, be not therefore reasonable, and Actions unfit, therefore unreasonable. If this Moral Fitness of certain Actions be not a Reason for the doing of them, I see not how any Thing can be a Reason for any Thing. Moral Fitness is Conformity to Order and Truth; and if

our Reason did not approve of this, we should have Cause to conclude it an irregular, disorderly Faculty. But it is certain that our Reason does approve of it, and that necessarily. The intrinsick Goodness of such Actions is an irresistible Recommendation to our Minds and Judgments, and by Consequence, is a perpetual Reason for the Concurrence of our Wills. Those Actions therefore which our Reason approves as self-worthy, and which are chosen and done with that View, and upon that Account, must not only be reasonable, in the strictest Sense of the Word, but in the highest Degree that our Actions are capable of. However, we must either allow those Actions to be reasonable, for the doing of which a good Reason may be given, and which our Faculty of Reason approves of; or it will follow, that none of our Actions are or can be reasonable.

720 What remains, is to deduce from hence the Obligation that we are now enquiring after. How does it appear that we ought to do what is reasonable? As Moral Agents, we are either obliged to this, or nothing. But what is it we mean by Obligation? Certainly not Compulsion. Since Obligation supposes Liberty, it must be something consistent with Liberty. It supposes likewise some Perception in the Mind, since no Agent can be obliged to or by any thing while he is ignorant of it. What is it then, which as soon as perceived, produces that State of Mind which we call Obligation? It must be some Motive, some Inducement, some Reason, that is fit to influence and incline the Will, and prevail with it to chuse and act accordingly.—Is not then Interest or Pleasure such an Inducement? It is in respect of sensible Agents, considered as such. And thus it is that Men, as sensible Agents, are obliged to pursue Pleasure or Natural Good; which as soon as they have experienced, they naturally and necessarily approve: But considered as Moral Agents, they have no Concern with Natural Good. I took notice in my former Papers, that Moral Good is the only Object of Moral Affection, and the only Aim or End of Moral Agents, who are influenced and attracted by it, as sensible Agents are by Natural Good. As the latter therefore are obliged to pursue their End, which I call Interest or Pleasure; so the former are obliged to pursue theirs, which is Moral Rectitude, Reason, or Virtue.—I intend not by this to set Natural and Moral Obligations on a Level, but to shew the Nature and Grounds of Obligation in general. In what

Respects they differ, and how far the one are superior to the other are Points not to be now discussed without too long a Digression.

1 I proceed therefore to observe, That the Obligation which arises from Authority, may be looked upon as compounded of the other two. Laws affect us in one Capacity, and Sanctions in another. As sensible Agents we are obliged to aim at Rewards, and avoid Punishments : As Moral Agents, we may be doubly obliged. It is morally fit and just to pay Obedience to a rightful Legislator, in all Cases not over-ruled by some higher Authority ; and if, moreover, his Laws be in themselves morally good, our Obligations rise in Proportion.

2 It appears, I think, from what has been said, that Moral Obligations are strictly connected with Moral Fitness, and the Reasons of Things. To resolve all Obligations into Interest, or natural Good, seems to me confounding Morality with Sensibility. It is in effect to say that Virtue is not good in itself, nor any otherwise good, than as it does us good. Whereas it is certainly self-amiable, and self-worthy ; and as such, must be exceedingly fit to operate on the Wills of Moral Agents, as it never fails to engage their Judgments. And indeed whatever appears worthy of Approbation and Esteem, as Virtue does in the highest degree, must needs appear worthy of Choice : And what appears worthy of Choice, ought to be chosen ; or in other Words, Men are obliged to chuse it. In short, whatever Agent is said to be under an Obligation to the Performance of any Action, the true Meaning of such an Expression, as it appears to me, is, that he perceives some good Reason, either internal or external, Moral or Natural, for the Performance of it. What falls short of this, can be no Obligation ; and what goes beyond it, must be Coaction.

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3 ART. VII. I cannot deny that there is an Agreement between Bounty and Gratitude, and a Disagreement between Bounty and Ingratitude ; but this only relatively to our Sentiment. Gratitude is agreeable to our Sentiment, and Ingratitude the contrary. I cannot conceive any other Agreement or Disagreement between them.

ANS. If there be not a real and objective Agreement between the Ideas of Bounty and Gratitude, how shall we be able to discover or determine that there is any such thing as real, absolute Truth ? Why may not all Ideal Agreements be looked upon as relative to

some internal Sense? The Agreement between twice Three, and Six, does not appear to me plainer or more evident, than that between Bounty and Gratitude. From whence I am forced to conclude, that either both are real, or both relative. Upon the former Supposition, I see no Occasion for any Sentiment or internal Sense, since our Understandings are sufficient for the Perception of real Agreements. Upon the latter Supposition our Understandings are quite useless.—For any thing that appears to the contrary, we perceive the Agreements of Moral Ideas in the same way, and by the same Faculty that we do those of Numbers; and why we should ascribe the Perception of the one to the Understanding, and the Perception of the other to an internal Sense, I am not able to comprehend.

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724 ART. XI. Reason can never be a Rule to us what Ends to propose to our selves, since an End is properly what we follow merely for its own sake. To give a Reason why any Object ought to be pursued as an End, is to shew that Object is not really an End, but only the Means leading to it. Nature alone can recommend to us the Ends of our Pursuit; Reason can only discover the most probable Means of obtaining them.

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ANS. It is upon his own Account, and for his own Sake, that every sensible Agent pursues Pleasure, or Gratification; which therefore, in Strictness, should not be called absolute, but relative¹ Good: Especially since it is no otherwise good, than as it suits his Faculties, and gratifies his Mind. For I can only consider Pleasure as a certain Modification of Mind resulting from the Agreement between Object and Faculty. We discover nothing more in it, than that it is grateful to us, or good for us. It cannot therefore, I think, be properly called an absolute, or self-good. Or if it may, yet it must be in another Sense, than what is meant by the absolute Goodness of Virtue. For in Virtue there is an inherent Worth, an objective Perfection. It is essentially good in it self, and has no Dependance on any Agents, or any Faculties. As such, it is upon its own Account, and for its own Sake, worthy to be chosen and pursued by moral Agents, who cannot but acknowledge and admire its intrinsick Excellence.

¹ In the former Part, (above, § 570) Pleasure was called absolute Good, but perhaps unadvisedly; or however, less properly.

725 It may also be questioned, whether Pleasure can, in Strictness, be called the ultimate End of a sensible Agent. Considered as sensible, he seems to be rather himself his own ultimate End. He pursues it for his own Sake, regards it always with reference to himself, and all his Views about it terminate in himself. However, in an objective Sense, it is manifestly his ultimate End ; since he neither intends nor knows any Thing beyond it.—But Virtue is the ultimate End of a Moral Agent, in the strictest Sense. As there is nothing beyond it to which it may be referred, but his View terminates in it ; so he pursues it upon its own Account, and for its own Sake. In the Pursuit of Pleasure, Self is not only regarded, and included, but the Idea is perpetually uppermost. In the Pursuit of Virtue, Self is quite overlooked. A perfect moral Agent, unmindful of himself, keeps his Thoughts fixed on the Worth and Dignity of his Object. That is, he acts virtuously, not because it is profitable, or pleasing ; but because it is, in it self, right and fit so to do.

726 I think it appears from the foregoing Considerations, that Virtue is the ultimate End of a Moral Agent, at least in a higher and stricter Sense, than Pleasure is of a sensible Agent. Even this, we see, cannot properly be said to be followed merely for its own Sake. Much less can subordinate Ends, which are only pursued for the sake of the Pleasure which is produced or occasioned by them. A Reason may always be given for the Pursuit of them ; and that Reason is Gratification. And it comes to the same Thing, whether we call them Means, or subordinate Ends.—Thus, for Instance, why does any Man pursue Fame, or the Esteem and Praise of his Fellow-Creatures ? Considered as a sensible Agent, the Reason is Pleasure ; Nature having given him a Faculty for the Relish of such an Object, and thereby rendered it delightful to him. In respect of a Moral Agent, the Reason is its Subservience to Morality ; as it gives more Room for the Exercise of his Virtues, and enables him to be more useful and beneficial.—If it be alledged, that we are led to the Pursuit of this, and other natural Objects, by an instinctive Determination, or Affection, antecedent to all Reasons, Views, or Designs, I readily grant it. But this very Instinct implies Pleasure, which always accompanies it, whether it be intended or no. And indeed without this, we could not have any Affection for any Objects ; excepting such as are self-eligible, or intrinsically and absolutely Good. We may consider Pleasure as the Ligament

which ties every natural Affection to its proper Object.—Besides, as soon as we are capable of reflecting and exercising our Reason ; instead of indulging such Instincts, and cherishing such Affections, we should certainly check and resist them, if we neither found Pleasure in them, nor any moral Usefulness. Nothing but their Subservience to one or both of these Ends, could possibly induce us to continue the Pursuit of them.

727 Upon this Account I do not understand, how Nature can recommend any particular Objects to our Choice and Pursuit, any otherwise than by annexing Pleasure to the Perception of them. If they have no absolute objective Worth, they must have some relative Goodness : And what can this be but either Pleasure, or a Tendency thereto ? That is, either immediate, or mediate ; in Possession, or in Prospect.

As various Senses are given us, both external and internal, for the Perception of Pleasure, or natural Good ; so we have a Faculty of a higher Kind for the Perception of Rectitude, or moral Good. Reason or Intelligence, both discovers the Worth of this Object, and recommends it to our Pursuit. Reason cannot indeed inform us what Objects they are which gratify us, or are good for us ; but it can discover Objects good in themselves, and recommend them accordingly.

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728 ART. XXI. You think Mr. Hutchinson makes Moral Rectitude to consist in nothing else but a Correspondence with Sentiment. He does so, and the Nature of the Thing requires it. It is also on this Account, that it is agreeable to Reason. For upon these Principles the Reasonableness of Morality may be demonstrated.

ANS. Why is any Moral Action right ? And why does the Mind approve it as such ? According to Mr. Hutchinson, the Answers are, Because such an Action is agreeable to an implanted Affection, and appears conformable to the Moral Sense. If this Scheme be true, it seems to me that nothing in Morality is capable of being demonstrated. I have no other Idea of Demonstration, but that of shewing how one thing necessarily follows from another, and is essentially connected with it. But what room is there for this in Morality on Mr. Hutchinson's Principles ? Such an Action agrees not with my Taste ; or is repugnant to my Moral Sense. What

does this prove? Nothing more than that the Action appears wrong to me. It is so far from proving it to be wrong in itself, that, it does not prove the Action must have such an Appearance to any other Person. Another Man's Moral Sense may possibly be quite different from mine. And either his or mine may possibly be altered the next Minute. The bare Possibility of this, is an effectual Bar to such a Proof.

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729 If Morality was founded on Instincts, we could no more demonstrate the intrinsick Preferableness of one Action to another, than that of one Colour to another. Every Agent would know, or, to speak more properly, would be sensible, which Actions pleased him, and which displeased him; but in themselves they would be all equally valuable, or rather equally worthless.

But are not those Actions right and fit, which conduce to the End proposed by the Agent? In this respect I allow they are. But this is only a relative, extrinsick Rectitude. The procuring of a rich Perfume, or a fine Prospect, is right and reasonable in the same sense. Certainly nothing of this kind can deserve the name of Moral Rectitude.

730 Actions relatively right, that is conduced to some End of the Agent, may not only want Moral, but even Natural Rectitude. Thus when, with some View of private Interest, a Mechanick departs from the Truth and Regularity of Workmanship; or an Architect transgresses the Rules of Order and Proportion, however their Actions may conduce to the proposed End, they are neither right according to Art, nor Nature. Whatever they may be in a relative Sense, they are absolutely and intrinsically wrong. Works of Art are more or less perfect in Proportion to their Conformity to Truth. And this Conformity to Truth, when carried on to Life and Manners, commences Moral Rectitude. I need not observe, how much more important those Actions must be, which are directed to sensible and intelligent Objects, than those which are directed to inanimate ones. The Relations interceding between Mind and Mind, must needs be of great Weight and Moment, and that Moment be increased in Proportion to the Dignity of the Agent and Object. But it may not be improper to take notice,

that Communication of Natural Good, is by no means an essential Ingredient of a Moral Rectitude.—If no Natural End, if the Happiness of no Being whatever could possibly be promoted by it, it would still be the Duty of every intelligent Creature to reverence and worship the Deity. What is it then that makes such an Action reasonable in such a Circumstance? Or upon what Account is the Agent obliged to perform it? On Account of its inherent, essential Fitness, which cannot be disregarded without a gross Violation of Order and Truth. The Supremacy, and infinite Perfection of such an Object infinitely heightens that Fitness, and makes it in the highest Degree reasonable, even supposing no Advantage did or could redound from it to any Agent whatever. And hence, I think, it plainly appears, that Moral Rectitude, considered abstractedly from all other Views, is it self the true and ultimate End of all Rational Beings.

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731 ART. XXIII. But I think this Foundation of Virtue very honourable. For these Moral Sentiments seem to be the universal Taste of Nature, and not only yours or mine. All Signs of the contrary manifestly arise from the Disorder of Nature.

ANS. Such a Foundation of Virtue seems to me dishonourable, because it takes away the Merit of virtuous Actions. For how can any Action be meritorious, to which the Agent is determined by the Force of a mere Impulse? By such a Weight the Mind is drawn, as it were, mechanically; and as far as that is the Case, I can see no more Moral Worth in the Actions thereby produced, than in the Movements of a Clock, or the Vibrations of a Pendulum. Besides, Reason is hereby placed in Subordination to inferior Powers and Principles; and such as Brutes themselves are possessed of. Nor is any other Employment allotted it, than that of being ministerial to Instinct, and contriving Means for the gratifying of a Natural Inclination.—The Universality of a Moral Affection, and a Moral Sense, does not remove the Imputation we are speaking of. Hunger and Thirst are universal Instincts; but however suitable they may be to our present condition, they are never reckoned honourable to Human Nature.—Undoubtedly Men may contract such Dispositions and Habits as are contrary to Nature; and in respect of the present Constitution of Mankind,

such Dispositions may be called Disorders. But in strictness, if there be real Order in Things and Actions, there can be no real Disorder. However, if Virtue be founded on Instinct, and according to the foregoing Supposition, this Instinct may possibly be worn out, and a contrary Affection acquired; in this Case the Agent has changed his End, and those Actions must be reputed reasonable which conduce to this new End. He still acts conformably to a prevailing Sentiment, and pursues the Bias of his corrupt Nature; and if Reason and Moral Rectitude be thrown out of the Question, who can convict him of doing wrong?

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732 ART. XXV. It is no Objection to say, that no Reason can be given for the Preference of these Sentiments to contrary ones. For the Choice of Ends is no way a Matter of Reason. But I think this Objection may be very well retorted. For without supposing such a Sentiment, I can find no Reason for ever preferring one Action to another.

ANS. Ends are either Ultimate or Subordinate. Ultimate Ends determine themselves, as being necessarily approved. The ultimate End of the Deity in all his Acts of Creation and Providence, I humbly suppose to be Moral Good. Every Thing is to be referred to this, and resolved into it. Why did he at first produce the Universe? Why does he still preserve and cherish it? Why replenish it continually with Variety of Good? Because he sees it to be absolutely right and fit so to do. Or in other Words, because the purest and most perfect Reason directs him to it. Though therefore Reason, or Intelligence, considered as an Attribute, do not make this End; yet it discovers it to be, what it really is in it self, an absolute, essential, and necessary Good; and by Consequence, the true ultimate End not only of the supreme Being, but of every Moral Agent.—We are so immersed in the Enjoyments and Desires of Natural Good, that the Ideas of Pleasure and Profit are continually obtruding themselves upon us; even in those Enquiries where they have no Concern. It seems evident to me, that making Pleasure of any Kind the End of a Moral Agent, is as absurd, as making Truth or Virtue the End of a sensible Agent. What a Moral Agent primarily proposes, is to act reasonably; let the Consequence be as it may. If it be asked, why a Moral Agent proposes to act reasonably; then I ask, why a sensible Agent

proposes to act pleasurable? Our Faculty of Reason does not constitute the one a Good; but perceives it to be such. Our Faculties of Sense do not constitute the other a Good; but find and feel it to be such. The one is good, merely because it is grateful; the other is good and amiable in its own Nature, antecedently to all Events or Operations.

733 As to subordinate Ends, and particular Objects of natural Affection, though these likewise are not determinable by our Reason, yet it does by no means follow, that there was originally no Reason or Ground for any Preference among them. It was in the Creator's Power, as it became his infinite Wisdom, to determine and appoint for all his Creatures such Ends, Objects, and Affections as would be most conducive to the Order and Harmony, the Welfare and Perfection of the whole. These Affections are no otherwise dependent on our Reason, than as it may represent to us, that they ought to be regulated and restrained, when they grow exorbitant; and likewise suggest to us proper Means for effecting it.—If by the Choice of Ends, be meant any thing more than the Approbation of them; then it belongs not to our perceptive Faculties, but the Will, which very often rejects what those approve.

734 Tho' without supposing Sentiment, no Reason can be given for the Preference of one of these Objects before another, or the Pursuit of any of them; yet in respect of Moral Actions, I apprehend the Case to be widely different. We prefer one Action before another, because we perceive it to be intrinsically better. Moral Goodness derives not its Worth from any Sentiments, or any Faculties; but is necessarily approved and admired by all Beings that are capable of understanding it. It does indeed promote many natural Ends in the highest and most effectual Manner; but this is not its only Excellence, nor even its chief Perfection. Virtue is it self, and in its own Nature, of all Objects, the noblest, over all Ends, supreme.

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735 ART. XXIX. It is true, if we do not act rationally, our Actions are not justifiable, or Praise-worthy: But it is not the Reasonableness of them that makes them so. Error is certainly a Defect; but that Defect is not always criminal. It is not Error, but wilful Error, that we condemn.

Therefore it is not Reason, but some other Faculty that is upon Trial, when we judge of the Justifiableness of any Action.

ANS. By the Reasonableness of an Action, may either be meant its Conformity to the true Reasons and Relations of Things; or to the Understanding of the Agent. The Compliance of the Will with a mis-informed Understanding, justifies the Agent, in respect of that Action. The Compliance of the Will with a well-informed Understanding, not only justifies the Agent, but is really in it self a right Action. An involuntary Error is certainly blameless. But tho' it can never be reputed a Crime, it may be, and often is, an Incapacity. It may disable the Agent so far, as to obstruct the Rectitude and Perfection of his Actions. What is it then that acquits and justifies an erroneous Agent? The Reasonableness of his Actions. For tho' they are not conformable to the true Reasons of Things, yet they are conformable to his own Reason and Judgment. And indeed by all the Reason in the world he is to be acquitted, and even commended, for following the best Light that he was able to get. As I know no other Faculty, besides that of Reason, that can possibly judge of such a Case; so I see not the least Occasion for introducing or supposing any other. Tho' the real Relations of Things are the true Rule of a Moral Agent; yet when that Rule is out of his Reach, Reason allows and directs him to be governed by apparent ones.

736 ART. XXX. We pity Error, but we condemn Malice. To judge wrong, which is purely a Matter of Reason, we only look upon as a Misfortune: but not to hearken to our Judgments, which is a Matter of Sentiment, we always take to be a Crime. Therefore it is the Intention, and not the Judgment, which constitutes the Worth of a Moral Action.

ANS. Tho' a right Judgment contribute to the Perfection of Actions, yet that alone is not sufficient to constitute them morally good. The Rectitude of Actions must not only be perceived, but intended. And this, I presume, may very well be done without Sentiment. If moral Rectitude be self-amiable, and self-eligible, it must be approved; and by Consequence, may be intended and pursued without any other View. And why may not a Rational Approbation recommend it to our Choice, with, or without a Natural Propensity? It is granted that a virtuous Intention is

essential to Virtue. This is perfectly agreeable to the Rational Scheme ; according to which, the chief End or Aim of the Agent is Virtue it self. But how is it consistent with the instinctive Scheme ; according to which, the Agent only follows the Bias of his Nature, and the Tendencies and Pre-determinations of his own Mind. Even here the End or the Intention is confessedly good ; but, as I apprehend, the Praise of it belongs to the Creator, not to the Creature.

JOHN BROWN

On the Motives to Virtue

[Reprinted from the first edition, 1751.]

ESSAY II.

SECTION III.

737 THERE are few among Mankind, who have not been often struck with Admiration at the Sight of that Variety of Colours and Magnificence of Form, which appear in an Evening Rainbow. The uninstructed in Philosophy consider that splendid Object, not as dependent on any other, but as being possessed of a self-given and original Beauty. But he who is led to know, that its Place and Appearance always varies with the Situation of the Sun ; that when the latter is in his Meridian, the former becomes an inconsiderable Curve skirting the Horizon ; that as the Sun descends, the Rainbow rises ; till at the Time of his Setting, it encompasses the Heavens with a glorious Circle, yet dies away when he disappears ; the Enquirer is then convinced, that this gay Meteor did but shine with a borrowed Splendor, derived from the Influence of that mighty Luminary.

Thus, in like Manner, though the Beauty, Fitness, Truth, or Virtue, of all those Actions which we term morally Good, seem at first View to reside in the several Actions, in an original and independent Manner ; yet on a nearer Scrutiny we shall find, that, properly speaking, their Nature ariseth from their Ends and Consequences ; that as these vary, the Nature of the several Actions varies with them ; that from these alone, Actions gain their

Splendor, are denominated morally Good, and give us the Ideas of Beauty, Fitness, Truth, or Virtue.

738 The first Proofs in Support of this Opinion shall be drawn from those very Writers who most zealously oppose it. And here 'tis first remarkable, that 'while they attempt to fix their several Criterions of absolute, independent Beauty, Fitness, and Truth; they are obliged to admit Exceptions, which effectually destroy what they design to establish.' The following Instance, from one of these celebrated Writers, is equally applicable to the other two.

Mr. Wollaston speaks in the following Manner: 'To talk to a Post, or otherwise treat it as if it was a Man, would surely be reckoned an Absurdity, if not Distraction. Why? Because this is to treat it as being what it is not. And why should not the converse be reckoned as bad; that is, to treat a Man as a Post? As if he had no Sense, and felt not Injuries which he doth feel; as if to him Pain and Sorrow were not Pain; Happiness not Happiness¹.' Now, you see that on his Scheme of absolute irrelative Truth, the Absurdity of talking to a Post is precisely of the same Nature with that of injuring a Man: For in both Cases, we treat the Post and the Man, as being what they are not. Consequently, on this Philosophy, if it be morally Evil to injure a Man, 'tis likewise morally Evil to talk to a Post. Not that I suppose Mr. Wollaston would have maintained this Consequence. He knew that the First of these Absurdities would only deserve the Name of Folly; the latter, of a Crime. As therefore he allows that Truth is equally violated in either Case; as there is something highly immoral in the one, and nothing immoral in the other, here is an Exception which overturns his Principle: which proves that the Morality or Immorality of Actions depends on something distinct from mere abstract, irrelative Truth.

739 The same Exception must be admitted on Dr. Clarke's System of Expression. For sure, 'tis neither fit nor reasonable, nor agreeable to the Relations of Things, that a Man should talk to a Post. Yet, although it be admitted as irrational and absurd, I do not imagine, any of Dr. Clarke's Defenders would say it was immoral. So again, with regard to Lord Shaftesbury, 'tis clear there can be nothing of the Sublime or Beautiful in this Action of talking to

¹ *Rel. of Nat.* (below, § 1034).

a Post: On the contrary, there is (to use his own Manner of Expression) an apparent Indecency, Impropriety, and Dissonance in it. Yet, although his Admirers might justly denominate it incongruous, they would surely be far from branding it as vile. Here then the same Exception again takes place, which demonstrates that Virtue cannot consist either in abstract Fitness or Beauty; but that something further is required in order to constitute its Nature.

40 Possibly therefore, the Patrons of these several Theories may alledge, that Actions which relate to inanimate Beings only, can properly be called no more than naturally beautiful, fit, or true: But that moral Fitness, Beauty, or Truth, can only arise from such Actions as relate to Beings that are sensible or intelligent. Mr. Balguy expressly makes this Exception: He affirms, that 'moral Actions are such as are knowingly directed towards some Object intelligent or sensible¹'.

And so far indeed this Refinement approaches towards the Truth, as it excludes all inanimate Things from being the Objects of moral Good and Evil. Yet even this Idea of moral Beauty, Fitness, or Truth, is highly indeterminate and defective: Because innumerable Instances may be given, of Actions directed towards Objects sensible and intelligent, some of which Actions are manifestly becoming, fit, or true, others as manifestly incongruous, irrational, and false, yet none of them, in any Degree, virtuous or vicious, meritorious or immoral. Thus to speak to a Man in a Language he understands, is an Action becoming, fit, or true: 'tis treating him according to the Order, Relations, and Truth of Things; 'tis treating him according to what he is. On the contrary, to speak to him in a Language he understands not, is an Action neither becoming, fit, nor true; 'tis treating him according to what he is not; 'tis treating him as a Post. But although the first of these Actions be undeniably becoming, fit, or true, who will call it Virtue? And though the latter be undeniably incongruous, irrational, and false, who will call it Vice? Yet both these Actions are directed towards a Being that is sensible and intelligent. It follows therefore, that an Action is not either morally Good or Evil, merely because it is conformable to the Beauty, Fitness, or

¹ *First Treat. on Moral Goodness* (above, § 544).

Truth of Things, even though it be directed towards an Object both sensible and intelligent; but that something still further, some more distinguishing and characteristic Circumstance is necessary, in order to fix its real Essence.

741 What this peculiar Circumstance may be, we come now to enquire.

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And first, though the noble Writer every where attempts to fix an original, independent, moral Beauty of Action, to which every thing is to be referred, and which itself is not to be referred to any thing further¹: Yet when he comes to an Enumeration of those particular Actions, which may be called morally Beautiful, he always singles out such as have a direct and necessary Tendency to the Happiness of Mankind. Thus he talks of the Notion of a public Interest², as necessary towards a proper Idea of Virtue: He speaks of public Affection in the same Manner; and reckons Generosity, Kindness, and Compassion, as the Qualities which alone can render Mankind truly Virtuous. So again, when he fixes the Bounds of the social Affections, he evidently refers us to the same End of human Happiness. ‘If Kindness or Love of the most natural Sort be immoderate, it is undoubtedly vicious. For thus over-great Tenderness destroys the Effect of Love; and excessive Pity renders us incapable of giving Succour³.’ When he fixes the proper Degrees of the private Affections, he draws his Proof from this one Point, ‘that by having the Self-Passions too intense or strong, a Creature becomes miserable⁴.’ Lastly, when he draws a Catalogue of such Affections, as are most opposite to Beauty and moral Good, he selects ‘Malice, Hatred of Society—Tyranny—Anger—Revenge—Treachery—Ingratitude⁵.’ In all these Instances, the Reference to human Happiness is so particular and strong, that from these alone an unprejudiced Mind may be convinced, that the Production of human Happiness is the great universal Fountain, whence our Actions derive their moral Beauty.

742 Thus again, though the excellent Dr. Clarke attempts to fix the Nature and Essence of Virtue in certain Differences, Relations,

¹ *Essay on Wit—Soliloquy—Enquiry—Moralists—Miscellanies—passim.*

² *Enqu.,* B. i. p. 2. § 3 (above, § 13).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

and Fitnesses of Things, to which our Actions ought ultimately to be referred ; yet in enumerating the several Actions which he denominates morally Good, he mentions none, but what evidently promote the same great End, ‘the Happiness of Man.’ He justly speaks of the Welfare of the Whole, as being the necessary and most important Consequence of virtuous Action. He tells us, ‘that it is more fit that God should regard the Good of the whole Creation, than that he should make the Whole continually miserable : That all Men should endeavour to promote the universal Good and Welfare of all ; than that all Men should be continually contriving the Ruin and Destruction of all¹.’ Here again, the Reference is so direct and strong to the Happiness of Mankind, that even from the Instances alledged by the worthy Author, it appears, that a Conformity of our Actions to this great End, is the very Essence of moral Rectitude.

43 Mr. Wollaston is no less explicit in this particular : For in every Instance he brings, the Happiness of Man is the single End to which his Rule of Truth verges in an unvaried Manner. Thus in the Passage already cited, though he considers the talking to a Post as an Absurdity he is far from condemning it as an immoral Action : But in the same Paragraph, when he comes to give an Instance of the Violation of moral Truth, he immediately has recourse to Man ; and not only so, but to the Happiness of Man. ‘Why, saith he, should not the converse be reckoned as bad ; that is, to treat a Man as a Post ; as if he had no Sense, and felt not Injuries, which he doth feel ; as if to him Pain and Sorrow were not Pain ; Happiness not Happiness ?’ At other Times he affirms, that ‘the Importance of the Truths on the one and the other Side should be diligently compared².’ And I would gladly know, how one Truth can be more important than another, unless upon this Principle, and in Reference to the Production of Happiness. Himself indeed confirms this Interpretation, when he speaks as follows : ‘The Truth violated in the former case was, B had a Property in that which gave him such a Degree of Happiness : That violated in the latter was, B had a Property in that which gave him a Happiness vastly superior to the other : The Violation therefore in the latter Case was upon this Account a vastly greater Violation than in the former³.’

¹ *Demonst.* (above, § 483).

² *Rel. of Nat.* (below, § 1034).

³ *Ibid.* (below, § 1039).

744 These Evidences may seem sufficient: But that all possible Satisfaction may be given in a Circumstance which is of the greatest Weight in the present Question, these further Observations may be added.

As therefore these celebrated Writers give no Instances of moral Beauty, Fitness, or Truth, but what finally relate to the Happiness of Man; so, if we appeal to the common Sense of Mankind, we shall see that the Idea of Virtue hath never been universally affixed to any Action or Affection of the Mind, unless where this Tendency to produce Happiness was at least apparent. What are all the black Catalogues of Vice or moral Turpitude, which we read in History, or find in the Circle of our own Experience, what are they but so many Instances of Misery produced? And what are the fair and amiable Atchievements of Legislators, Patriots, and Sages renowned in Story, what but so many Efforts to raise Mankind from Misery, and establish the public Happiness on a sure Foundation? The first are vicious, immoral, deformed, because there we see Mankind afflicted or destroyed: The latter are virtuous, right, beautiful, because here we see Mankind preserved and assisted.

745 But that Happiness is the last Criterion or Test, to which the moral Beauty, Truth, or Rectitude of our Affections is to be referred, the two following Circumstances demonstrate: First, ‘those very Affections and Actions, which, in the ordinary Course of Things, are approved as virtuous, do change their Nature, and become vicious in the strictest Sense, when they contradict this fundamental Law, of the greatest publick Happiness.’ Thus, although in general it is a Parent’s Duty to prefer a Child’s Welfare, to that of another Person, yet, if this natural and just Affection gain such Strength, as to tempt the Parent to violate the Public for his Child’s particular Welfare; what was before a Duty, by this becomes immoderate and criminal.

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746 Secondly, with such uncontroled Authority does this great Principle command us; that ‘Actions, which are in their own Nature most shocking to every humane Affection, lose at once their moral Deformity, when they become subservient to the general Welfare; and assume both the Name and the Nature of Virtue.’ For what is more contrary to every gentle and kind Affection, that dwells in the human Breast, than to shed the Blood,

or destroy the Life of Man? Yet the ruling Principle above-mentioned, can reconcile us even to this. And when the Necessity of public Example compels us to make a Sacrifice of this Kind; though we may lament the Occasion, we cannot condemn the Fact: So far are we from branding it as Murder, that we approve it as Justice: and always defend it on this great Principle alone, that it was necessary for the public Good.

47 Thus it appears, that those Actions which we denominate Virtuous, Beautiful, Fit, or True, have not any absolute and independent, but a relative and reflected Beauty: And that their Tendency to produce Happiness is the only Source from whence they derive their Lustre. Hence therefore we may obtain a just and adequate Definition of Virtue: Which is no other than ‘the¹ Conformity of our Affections with the public Good:’ Or ‘the voluntary Production of the greatest Happiness.’

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SECTION VI.

48 HAVING at length gained an adequate Idea of Virtue, and found that it is no other than ‘the voluntary Production of the greatest public Happiness;’ we may now safely proceed to consider, ‘what are the Motives by which Mankind can be induced to the Practice of it?’

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And as it hath already been made evident, that the Essence of Virtue consists in a Conformity of our Affections and Actions, with the greatest public Happiness; so it will now appear, that ‘the only Reason or Motive, by which Individuals can possibly be induced to the Practice of Virtue, must be the Feeling immediate, or the Prospect of future private Happiness.’

¹ The Gentlemen above examined seem to have mistaken the Attributes of Virtue for its Essence. Virtue is procuring Happiness: To procure Happiness is beautiful, reasonable, true; these are the Qualities or Attributes of the Action: But the Action itself, or its Essence, is procuring Happiness.

The Reader who is curious to examine further into this Subject, may consult the *Prelim. Dissert. to Dr. Law's Translation of King's Origin of Evil*: Together with several Passages in the Translator's Notes, where he will find Sense and Metaphysics united in a very eminent and extraordinary Degree.

Doubtless, the noble Writer's Admirers will despise and reject this, as an unworthy Maxim. For so it hath happened, that in the Height of their Zeal, for supporting his Opinions, they generally stigmatize private Happiness, as a Thing scarce worth a wise Man's inquiring after. Indeed, the many ambiguous Phrases of their Master have contributed not a little to this vulgar Error.

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749 Now ere we proceed further, it may be necessary to remark, that in some Degree there hath been a Strife about Words in this Particular too. For these Expressions of Selfishness and Disinterestedness have been used in a very loose and indeterminate Manner. In one Sense a Motive is called disinterested; when it consists in a pure benevolent Affection, or a Regard to the moral Sense. In another, no Motive is disinterested: For even in acting according to these Impulses of Benevolence and Conscience, we gratify an Inclination, and act upon the Principle or immediate Feeling of private Happiness. Thus when we say, 'We love Virtue for Virtue's Sake;' 'tis only implied, that we find immediate Happiness from the Love and Practice of Virtue, without Regard to external or future Consequences.

750 Another Source of mutual Misapprehension on this Subject hath been 'the Introduction of metaphorical Expressions instead of proper ones.' Nothing is so common among the Writers on Morality, as 'the Harmony of Virtue'—'the Proportion of Virtue.' So the noble Writer frequently expresseth himself. But his favourite Term, borrowed indeed from the Ancients, is 'the Beauty of Virtue.'—*Quae si videri posset, mirabiles excitaret amores*¹.— Of this our Author and his Followers, especially the most ingenious of them², are so enamoured, that they seem utterly to have forgot they are talking in Metaphor, when they describe the Charms of this sovereign Fair. Insomuch, that an unexperienced Person, who should read their Encomiums, would naturally fall into the Mistake of him, who asked the Philosopher, 'Whether the Virtues were not living Creatures³?'. Now this figurative Manner, so essentially interwoven into philosophical Disquisition, hath been the Occasion of great Error. It tends to mislead us both with regard to the Nature of Virtue, and our Motives to the Practice of

¹ Cicero.

² Mr. Hutcheson.

³ Senecae *Epist.* cxiv.

it. For first, it induceth a Persuasion, that Virtue is excellent without Regard to any of its Consequences : And secondly, that he must either want Eyes, or common Discernment, who doth not at first Sight fall in Love with this matchless Lady.

Therefore setting aside, as much as may be, all ambiguous Expressions, it seems evident, that ‘a Motive, from its very Nature, must be something that affects ourself.’ If any Man hath found out a Kind of Motive which doth not affect himself, he hath made a deeper Investigation into the ‘Springs, Weights, and Balances’ of the human Heart, than I can pretend to. Now what can possibly affect ourself, or determine us to Action, but either the Feeling or Prospect of Pleasure or Pain, Happiness or Misery ?

751 But to come to the direct Proof: ’Tis evident, even to Demonstration, that no Affection can, in the strict Sense, be more or less selfish or disinterested than another ; because, whatever be its Object, the Affection itself is stil no other than a Mode either of Pleasure or of Pain ; and is therefore equally to be referred to the Mind or Feeling of the Patient, whatever be its external Occasion. Indeed, a late Writer of Subtilty and Refinement hath attempted to make a Distinction here. He says, ‘It hath been observed, that every Act of Virtue or Friendship is attended with a secret Pleasure ; from whence it hath been concluded, that Friendship and Virtue could not be disinterested. But the Fallacy of this is obvious. The virtuous Sentiment or Passion produces the Pleasure, and does not arise from it. I feel a Pleasure in doing good to my Friend, because I love him : but I do not love him for the Sake of that Pleasure¹.’ Now to me, the Fallacy of this is obvious. For in Fact, neither the Passion, nor the Pleasure, are either the Cause or the Consequence of each other ; they neither produce nor arise from each other ; because, in Reality, they are the same Thing under different Expressions. This will be clear, if we state the Case as follows: ‘To love my Friend, is to feel a Pleasure in doing him Good :’ And conversely ; ‘to feel a Pleasure in doing Good to my Friend, is to love him.’ Where ’tis plain that the Terms are synonymous. The Pleasure therefore is the very Passion itself ; and neither prior nor posterior to it, as this Gentleman supposeth.

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¹ Hume’s *Essays, Mor. and Polit.*

752 The Reasons why the great universal Principle of private Happiness hath not been so clearly seen in the Benevolent, as in the Self-Passions, seem to be these. First, Ambiguous Expressions, such as have been remarked above. 2dly, Perhaps some Degree of Pride, and Affectation of Merit; because Merit seems to appear in what is called Disinterest. 3dly, And perhaps principally, because in the Exercise of the benevolent Passions, the Happiness is essentially concomitant with the Passion itself, and therefore is not easily separated from it by the Imagination, so as to be considered as a distinct End. Whereas in the Passions called Selfish, the Happiness sought after is often unattainable, and therefore easily and necessarily distinguished by the Imagination as a positive End. This Circumstance of Union however, as is judiciously remarked by one of the noble Writer's Followers¹, proves the great Superiority and Excellence of the benevolent Affections, considered as a Source of Happiness, beyond the Passions and Appetites, commonly called the Selfish.

753 But although these Observations be necessary, in order to clear up an Affair, which hath been much perplexed with philosophical, or unphilosophical Refinements; yet, on a closer Examination, it will appear, in the most direct Manner, from the noble Writer himself, that 'there is no other Principle of human Action, but that of the immediate or foreseen Happiness of the Agent:' That all these amusing Speculations concerning the Comely, Fit, and Decent; all these verbal Separations between Pleasure, Interest, Beauty, and Good, might have been sunk in one precise and plain Disquisition, concerning such Actions and Affections as yield a lasting, and such as afford only a short and transient Happiness. For thus, after all, his Lordship explains himself: 'That Happiness is to be pursued, and, in Fact, is always sought after; that the Question is not, who loves himself, and who not; but who loves and serves himself the rightest, and after the truest Manner.—That 'tis the Height of Wisdom, no doubt, to be rightly Selfish'—'Even to leave Family, Friends, Country, and Society—in good Earnest, who would not, if it were Happiness to do so²?'

These Expressions are so strongly pointed, as to leave no further Doubt concerning the noble Writer's Sentiments on this Subject.

¹ Three Treatises, by J. H. (James Harris). Treat. 3^d. *On Happiness.*

² *Wit and Hum.* Part iii. § 3.

Indeed, they are the natural Dictates of common Sense, unsophisticated with false Philosophy. In every subsequent Debate therefore, wherein his Lordship's Opinions are concerned, we may safely build on this as an acknowledged and sure Foundation, 'that the Motives of Man to the Practice of Virtue, can only arise from a Sense of his present, or a Prospect of his future Happiness.'

SECTION VII.

754 Now this Conclusion will carry us to another Question of a very interesting and abstruse Nature : That is, ' How far, and upon what Foundation, the uniform Practice of Virtue, is really and clearly connected with the Happiness of every Individual?' For so far, as we have seen, and no further, can every Individual be naturally moved to the Practice of it.

755 This is evidently a Question of Fact : And as it relates to the Happiness of Man, can only be determined by appealing to his Constitution. If this be indeed uniform and invariable ; that is, if every Individual hath the same Perceptions, Passions, and Desires ; then indeed the Sources of Happiness must be similar and unchangeable. If, on the contrary, different Men be differently constituted ; if they have different Perceptions, Passions, and Desires ; then must the Sources of their Happiness be equally various.

It should seem therefore, that 'while Moralists have been enquiring into human Happiness, they have generally considered it, as arising from one uniform and particular Source, instead of tracing it up to those various Fountains whence it really springs ; which are indefinitely various, combined, and indeterminable.' And this seems to have been the most general Foundation of Error.

756 If we speak with Precision, there are but three Sources in Man, of Pleasure and Pain, Happiness and Misery : These are Sense, Imagination, and the Passions. Now the slightest Observation will convince us, that these are associated, separated, and combined in Man, with a Variety almost infinite. In some, the Pleasures and Pains of Sense predominate ; Imagination is dull ; the Passions inactive. In others, a more delicate Frame awakens all the Powers of Imagination ; the Passions are refined ; the Senses disregarded.

A third Constitution is carried away by the Strength of Passion : The Calls of Sense are contemned ; and Imagination becomes no more than the necessary Instrument of some further Gratification.

757 From overlooking this plain Fact, seems to have arisen the Discordance among Philosophers concerning the Happiness of Man. And while each hath attempted to exhibit one favourite Picture, as the Paragon or Standard of human Kind ; they have all omitted some Ten thousand other Resemblances which actually subsist in Nature.

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758 But although these Observations may afford sufficient Proof, that the Stoic and Epicurean Pictures of Mankind are equally partial ; yet still it remains to be enquired how far, upon the whole, the human Kind in Reality leans towards the one or the other : That is, ‘how far, and in what Degree, the uniform Practice of Virtue constitutes the Happiness of Individuals ?’ Now the only Method of determining this Question, will be to select some of the most striking Features of the human Heart : By this Means we may approach towards a real Likeness, though from that infinite Variety which subsists in Nature, the Draught must ever be inadequate and defective.

To begin with the lowest Temperature of the human Species ; ‘there are great Numbers of Mankind, in whom the Senses are the chief Sources of Pleasure and Pain.’

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To Men thus formed, how can Virtue gain Admittance ? Do you appeal to their Taste of Beauty ? They have none. To their acknowledged Perceptions of Right and Wrong ? These they measure by their private Interest. To the Force of the public Affections ? They never felt them. Thus every Avenue is foreclosed, by which Virtue should enter.

759 The next remarkable Peculiarity is, ‘where not the Senses, but Imagination is the predominant Source of Pleasure.’ Here the Taste always runs into the elegant Refinements of polite Arts and Acquirements ; of Painting, Music, Architecture, Poetry, Sculpture : Or, in Defect of this truer Taste, on the false Delicacies of Dress, Furniture, and Equipage. Yet Experience tells us, that this Character is widely different from the virtuous one : That all the Powers of Imagination may subsist in their full Energy, while

the public Affections and moral Sense are weak or utterly inactive. Nor can there be any necessary Connection between these different Feelings ; because we see Numbers immersed in all the finer Pleasures of Imagination, who never once consider them as the Means of giving Pleasure to others, but merely as a selfish Gratification.

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'Tis true, the Pleasures of Imagination and Virtue are often united in the same Mind ; but 'tis equally true, that they are often separate ; that they who are most sensible to the one, are entire Strangers to the other ; that one Man, to purchase a fine Picture, will oppress his Tenant ; that another, to relieve his distressed Tenant, will sell his Statues or his Pictures. The Reason is evident : The one draws his chief Pleasure from Imagination ; the other from Affection only. 'Tis clear therefore, that ' where Imagination is naturally the predominant Source of Pleasure,' the Motives to Virtue must be very partial and weak, since the chief Happiness ariseth from a Source entirely distinct from the benevolent Affections.

760 Another, and very different Temperature of the Heart of Man is that 'wherein neither Sense nor Imagination, but the Passions are the chief Sources of Pleasure and Pain.' This often forms the best or the worst of Characters. As it runs either, First, Into the Extreme of Selfishness, Jealousy, Pride, Hatred, Envy, and Revenge ; or, 2dly, Into the amiable Affections of Hope, Faith, Candour, Pity, Generosity, and Good-will ; or, 3dly, Into a various Mixture or Combination of these ; which is undoubtedly the most common Temperature of human Kind.

Now to the first of these Tempers, how can we affirm with Truth, that there is a natural Motive to Virtue ? On the contrary, it should seem, that, if there be any Motive, it must be to Vice. For 'tis plain, that from the Losses, Disappointments, and Miseries of Mankind, such vile Tempers draw their chief Felicity. The noble Writer indeed, in his Zeal for Virtue, considers these black Passions as unnatural, and brands them as a Source of constant Misery¹.

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761 When therefore the noble Writer calls these Affections unnatural, he doth not sufficiently explain himself. If indeed by their being

¹ *Enquiry* (above, § 60-62).

unnatural, he means, that 'they are such in their Degrees or Objects as to violate the public Happiness, which is the main Intention of Nature ;' in this Sense, 'tis acknowledged, they are unnatural. But this Interpretation is foreign to the Question ; because it affects not the Individual. But if, by their being unnatural, he would imply, that they are 'a Source of constant Misery to the Agent ;' this seems a Proposition not easy to be determined in the Affirmative.

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762 For 'tis plain, that in the Case of the 'Men of gentlest Dispositions, and best of Tempers, occasionally agitated by ill Humour,' there must be a strong Opposition and Discordance, a violent Conflict between the habitual Affections of Benevolence, and these accidental Eruptions of Spleen and Rancour which rise to obstruct their Course. A Warfare of this Kind must indeed be a State of complete Misery, when all is Uproar within, and the distracted Heart set at Variance with itself. But the Case is widely different, where 'a thorow active Spleen prevails, a close and settled Malignity and Rancour.' For in this Temper, there is no parallel Opposition of contending Passions : Nor therefore any similar Foundation for inward Disquiet and intense Misery.

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Thus where the selfish or malevolent Affections happen to prevail, there can be no internal Motive to Virtue.

763 On the contrary, where the amiable Affections of Hope, Candour, Generosity, and Benevolence predominate, in this best and happiest of Tempers, Virtue hath indeed all the Force and Energy, which the noble Writer attributes to her Charms. For where the Calls of Sense are weak, the Imagination active and refined, the public Affections predominate ; there the moral Sense must naturally reign with uncontrouled Authority ; must produce all that Self-Satisfaction, that Consciousness of merited Kindness and Esteem, in which, his Lordship affirms, the very Essence of our Motives to Virtue doth consist. This shall with Pleasure be acknowledged, nay asserted, as 'the happiest of all Temperaments,' whenever it can be found or acquired. To a Mind thus formed, Virtue doth indeed bring an immediate and ample Reward of perfect Peace and sincere Happiness in all the common Situations of Life. It may therefore be with Truth affirmed, that a Temper thus framed

must indeed be naturally and internally moved to the uniform Practice of Virtue.

764 There are, besides these, an endless Variety of Characters formed from the various Combinations of these essential Ingredients ; which are not designed as a full Expression of all the Tempers of Mankind : They are the Materials only, out of which these Characters are formed. They are no more than the several Species of simple Colours laid, as it were, upon the Pallet ; which, variously combined and associated by the Hand of an experienced Master, would indeed call forth every striking Resemblance, every changeful Feature of the Heart of Man.

765 Now, among all this infinite Variety of Tempers which is found in Nature, we see there cannot be any uniform Motive to Virtue, save only ‘where the Senses are weak, the Imagination refined, and the public Affections strongly predominant.’ For in every other Character, where either the Senses, gross Imagination, or selfish Passions prevail, a natural Opposition or Discordance must arise, and destroy the uniform Motive to Virtue, by throwing the Happiness of the Agent into a different Channel. How seldom this sublime Temper is to be found, is hard to say : But this may be affirmed with Truth, that every Man is not really possessed of it in the Conduct of Life, who enjoys it in Imagination, or admires it in his Closet, as it lies in the *Enquiry concerning Virtue*. A Character of this supreme Excellence must needs be approved by most : And the Heart of Man being an unexhausted Fountain of Self-Deceit, what it approves, is forward to think itself possessed of. Thus a lively Imagination and unperceived Self-Love, fetter the Heart in certain ideal Bonds of their own creating : Till at length some turbulent and furious Passion arising in its Strength, breaks these fantastic Shackles which Fancy had imposed, and leaps to its Prey like a Tyger chained by Cobwebs.

SECTION VIII.

766 FROM these different Views of human Nature, let us now bring this Argument to a Conclusion.

The noble Writer’s Scheme of Morals therefore, being grounded on a Supposition, which runs through the whole Course of his Argument, that ‘all Mankind are naturally capable of attaining

a Taste or Relish for Virtue, sufficient for every Purpose of social Life,' seems essentially defective. For, from the Enquiry already made into the real and various Constitution of Man, it appears, that a great Part of the Species are naturally incapable of this fancied Excellence. That the various Mixture and Predominancy of Sense, Imagination, and Passion, give a different Cast and Complexion of Mind to every Individual : That the Feeling or Prospect of Happiness can only arise from this Combination : That consequently, where the benevolent Affections and moral Sense are weak, the selfish Passions and Perceptions headstrong, there can be no internal Motive to the consistent Practice of Virtue.

767 The most plausible Pretence I could ever meet with, amidst all the Pomp of Declamation thrown out in support of this All-Sufficiency of a Taste in Morals, is this : 'That although the Force and Energy of this Taste for Virtue appears not in every Individual, yet the Power lies dormant in every human Breast ; and needs only be called forth by a voluntary Self-Discipline, in order to be brought to its just Perfection. That the Improvement in our Taste in Morals is parallel to the Progress of the Mind in every other Art and Excellence, in Painting, Music, Architecture, Poetry : In which, a true Taste, however natural to Man, is not born with him, but formed and brought forth to Action by a proper Study and Application.'

The noble Writer hath innumerable Passages of this Kind : So many indeed, that it were Labour lost to transcribe them¹. And one of his Followers hath affirmed in still more emphatical Expressions, if possible, than his Master, that 'the Height of Virtuoship is Virtue²'.

768 Now this State of the Case, though at first View it carries some Degree of Plausibility, yet, on a closer Examination, destroys the whole System. For if, as it certainly is, the Capacity for a Taste in Morals, be similar to a Capacity for a Taste in Arts ; 'tis clear, that the most assiduous Culture or Self-Discipline can never make it even general, much less universal. One Man, we see, hath a Capacity or Genius for Painting, another for Music, a third for Architecture, a fourth for Poetry. Torture each of them as you please, you cannot infuse a Taste for any, but his own congenial

¹ *Charact. passim.*

² *Letters of Hydaspes to Philemon*, Let. vi.

Art. If you attempt to make the Poet an Architect, or the Painter a Musician, you may make a pretending Pedant, never an accomplished Master. 'Tis the same in Morals: Where the benevolent Affections are naturally strong, there is a Capacity for a high Taste in Virtue: Where these are weak or wanting, there is in the same Proportion, little or no Capacity for a Taste in Virtue. To harangue, therefore, on the superior Happiness attending the Exercise of the public Affections, is quite foreign to the Purpose. This superior Happiness is allowed, where the public Affections can be found, or made, predominant. But how can any Consequence be drawn from hence, so as to influence those who never felt the Impulse of public Affection?

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69 Thus, as according to these Moralists, the Relish or Taste for Virtue is similar to a Taste for Arts; so what is said of the Poet, the Painter, the Musician, may in this Regard with equal Truth be said of the Man of Virtue—*Nascitur, non fit*. Hence it is evident, that the noble Writer's System, which supposeth all Men capable of this exalted Taste, is chimerical and groundless.

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70 Again, the noble Writer often attempts to strengthen his Argument, by 'representing the external Good which naturally flows from Virtue, and the external Evils which naturally attend on Vice'¹. But sure this is rather deserting than confirming his particular Theory; which is, to prove that Happiness is essential to Virtue, and inseparable from it: 'That Misery is essential to Vice, and inseparable from it.'—Now, in bringing his Proofs from Happiness or Misery of the external Kind, he clearly deserts his original Intention: Because these Externals are not immediate, but consequential; not certain, but contingent: They are precisely of the Nature of Reward and Punishment; and therefore can have no Part in the Question now before us; which relates solely to 'that Happiness or Misery arising from the inward State of the Mind, Affections, and moral Sense, on the Commission of Vice, or the Practice of Virtue.' And this hath been already considered at large.

771 However, that nothing may be omitted which can even remotely affect the Truth; we may observe, in passing, that after all the

¹ *Enquiry*, B. ii. P. i. § 3.

laboured and well-meant Declamation on this Subject, 'tis much easier to prove, 'that Vice is the Parent of external Misery, than that Virtue is the Parent of external Happiness.' 'Tis plain, that no Man can be vicious in any considerable Degree, but he must suffer either in his Health, his Fame, or Fortune. Now the Generality of Moralists, after proving or illustrating this, have taken it for granted, as a certain Consequence, that the external Goods of Life are, by the Law of Contraries, in a similar Manner annexed to the Practice of Virtue. But in Reality the Proof can reach no further than to shew the happy Consequences of Innocence, which is a very different Thing from Virtue; for Innocence is only the abstaining from Evil; Virtue, the actual Production of Good. Now 'tis evident indeed, that by abstaining from Evil (that is, by Innocence) we must stand clear of the Miseries to which we expose ourselves by the Commission of it: And this is as far as the Argument will go. But if we rigorously examine the external Consequences of an active Virtue, in such a World as this; we shall find, it must be often maintained at the Expence both of Health, Ease, and Fortune; often the Loss of Friends, and Increase of Enemies; not to mention the unwearyed Diligence of Envy, which is ever watchful and prepared to blast distinguished Merit. In the mean time, the innoxious Man sits unmolested and tranquil; loves Virtue, and praiseth it; avoids the Miseries of Vice, and the Fatigue of active Virtue; offends no Man, and therefore is beloved by all; and for the rest, makes it up by fair Words and civil Deportment. Thus Innocence, and not Virtue; Abstinence from Evil, not the Production of Good, is the furthest Point to which Mankind in general can be carried, from 'a Regard to the external Consequences of Action.'

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SECTION IX.

772 HAVING sufficiently evinced the flimsy, though curious, Contexture of these Cobweb Speculations spun in the Closet, let us now venture abroad into the World; let us proceed to something applicable to Life and Manners; and consider what are the real Motives, by which Mankind may be sway'd to the uniform Practice of Virtue.

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773 Now as it is clear from the Course of these Observations, that nothing can work this great Effect, but what can produce an ‘entire and universal Coincidence between private and public Happiness;’ so is it equally evident, that nothing can effectually convince Mankind, that their own Happiness universally depends on procuring, or at least not violating the Happiness of others, save only ‘the lively and active Belief of an all-seeing and all-powerful God, who will hereafter make them happy or miserable, according as they designedly promote or violate the Happiness of their Fellow-Creatures.’ And this is the Essence of Religion.

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JOHN CLARKE

(OF HULL)

The Foundation of Morality in Theory and Practice considered

[Reprinted here from the first edition of 1730.]

774 OUR Author in his Third Section, makes it his Business expressly, to reduce all Morality to Benevolence, or a disinterested Love of others, and agreeably to that Notion, in his Answer to the Objection¹, brought against the Proposition under debate, from the Suspicion of Self-Interest in our Prosecution of Virtue, because the whole Race of Mankind seems perswaded of the Existence of an Almighty Being, who will certainly secure Happiness, either here or hereafter, to those who are Virtuous. He has these Words, ‘This Benevolence (i.e. which flows from a View of Reward from the Deity) does scarce deserve the name, when we desire not, nor delight in the Good of others, any farther than it serves our own Ends.’ I am sorry to meet with such a Declaration as this, from an Author I so much value, tho’ he has minced the Matter too; for if he would have spoke home, and conformably to his own Principles, he should not have said that Benevolence flowing from a View of Reward from the Deity, does scarce deserve the Name; but does not at all deserve the Name: For he tells us², ‘If there be any Benevolence, it must be Disinterested;’ which it is certain a Disposition to do Good to others, flowing from a View of Reward from the Deity, is not, and therefore cannot deserve the Name of Benevolence at all, and by consequence is no Virtue,

¹ Above, § 101.

² Above, § 92.

since all Virtue, according to him, is reducible to Benevolence, or a Disinterested Love of others, in Principle or Practice.

775 I desire him to reconcile this Doctrine to the Scriptures (for he has too much good Sense to be an Infidel, I dare say.) In them the greatest Reward is promised to Virtue, and Vice threatened with the greatest of Punishments, on purpose sure to excite Mankind to the Practice of Virtue; for if they were not designed for that purpose, I should be glad to be informed, what they were design'd for. It's certain they have a very strong Tendency (where they are believed) to that purpose, and that only I should think. Those Rewards and Punishments are visibly design'd to give the most reasonable Encouragement to Virtue, and Check to Vice, by making it every Man's greatest Interest to be Virtuous. Which shows our Author's general Notion of Virtue, or Moral Good to be wrong; for if all Virtue be Benevolence, and all Benevolence disinterested, 'tis visibly the highest Impertinence, to pretend to encourage or excite Men to Virtue, by the Proposal of Rewards and Punishments, because it is the same as to pretend to engage Men by Promises and Threats of the highest Importance, by Views of Interest, the most powerful and effectual, to act without the least View or Regard to Self-Interest at all. Which who ever can make out to be practicable, will hardly, I think, find ought else too difficult for him. For to induce Men by Rewards and Punishments to act without any Views of Interest, is, I take it, just as feasible, as to give a Man a hundred Pounds, to do a piece of Work for nothing.

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776 He reduces, as I have already taken notice, all Virtue to Benevolence.

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Benevolence, I think, may be truly defined to be, An Inclination, or Disposition of the Mind to do Good to others, arising more or less from a Delight in their Happiness. This Definition, I presume, the Author will readily allow, as agreeable to his own Sense and Notion of Benevolence. Now, tho' it should be granted him (which yet is not true) that this Delight in the Happiness of others, is never produced by Views of Self-Interest, yet it will never follow from thence, that the Disposition of Mind arising from it is not founded upon Self-Love, in a Regard at least to the procuring that Delight

we take in the Happiness of others, or the Pleasure naturally attending all Actions conformable to that Disposition of Mind, called Benevolence, if not in a View to other natural good Consequent thereupon. For tho' the Delight should be allowed in all Cases, to be the necessary Effect of the Perception, or Thought of another's Happiness, antecedent to all Reflection of the Mind upon such a Perception or Thought, or the Consequences that may arise from the Happiness of another to our own Advantage, yet it is impossible to conceive, but that the Mind, naturally fond of Pleasure, especially such as is Innocent, and not apprehended to be followed by any harm at all, must be disposed to exert it self, in Acts proper to procure the said Delight, in Order to the Enjoyment thereof, as well as for the sake of other natural Good, or any Advantage whatever supposed likely to follow from them. But the more effectually to unravel our Author's Paragraph, and shew the Mistake thereof, I proceed in the following manner.

777 1. Self-Love is a Principle common to all Mankind, and inseparable from human Nature, and indeed all Natures capable of Happiness and Misery. The Instances of such as voluntarily destroy themselves, by offering Violence to their own Lives, are so far from being any Objection against this, that they are a Confirmation of it. For none are observed to act in that manner, out of Gaiety of Temper, but only when driven to it, by a melancholy State of Mind, that renders them incapable of any real Enjoyment of Life, and subjects them to great and insupportable Misery. Then the Mind, from the powerful Principle of Self-Love, is hurried on to seek for an End of its Anguish and Distress, by getting out of a World of Woe, in hopes of a State of utter Insensibility, or of finding it self in some other World, where it apprehends it cannot be worse, but may possibly be better.

778 2. Self-Love, as to its Influence upon the Mind, is superior to all other Love, and indeed the Foundation thereof, excepting the Love of Complacency, which is not always founded upon Self-Love, nor does it influence the Mind to Action any further than it produces the Love of Benevolence. For as to the Love of Desire or Enjoyment, and that of Benevolence, there could be no possible Reason or Support for either but Self-Love. The former is visibly founded upon the Desire of Happiness, which is but another Name for Self-Love; and the latter is, tho' not

so apparently, yet as truly and certainly, built upon the same Bottom, and cannot subsist without it. For the Love of Benevolence is, as has been above said, a Desire or Inclination to do Good to others. Now the Object and Cause of Desire is Pleasure alone, or the supposed Means of procuring it. So that Acts of Benevolence are the Object of Inclination, and the Good of others the Object of Desire, only as they are proper to procure the Delight or Satisfaction, that attends or follows from them. This will appear more evidently from the following Considerations.

- 779** 3. Pleasure and Pain, and the supposed Means of producing them, are alone capable of raising in the Mind, the Passions or Dispositions of Inclination and Aversion, the Cause and Object of the former being always Pleasure, or the supposed Means of procuring it; and the Cause and Object of the latter, Pain, or the Means of producing it, either Real or Apprehended, and nothing else. All other Things but Pleasure and Pain, with the supposed Means of attaining the one, and avoiding the other, are perfectly indifferent to the Mind, what it can be under no Trouble or Concern about; and to assert the contrary, is a visible Contradiction; it is the same as to affirm, the Mind may be troubled at what can give it no Trouble at all, or concerned for what can give it no Concern in the least. For what the Mind apprehends no ways necessary to its Pleasure or Happiness, so long as that Apprehension continues, it can be perfectly easy without; for if it cannot, it is then necessary to its Satisfaction or Happiness, and so apprehended by it, which is contrary to the Supposition. And where the Mind is perfectly at Ease without a Thing, there it is absolutely free from all Desire of it, or Inclination for it, because Desire of, or Inclination for a Thing, is nothing but an Uneasiness for the want of it. And, again, what the Mind apprehends incapable in its Nature of giving it any Pain or Trouble, it can have no Aversion for, because Aversion is only an Uneasiness of Mind, arising from the Sense or Apprehension of a Thing's being in its Nature capable of causing Pain, mediately, or immediately.

- 780** 4. Now, if, as our Author tells us¹, 'The Affections which are

¹ Above, § 90.

of most Importance in Morals are Love and Hatred; and all the rest seem but different Modifications of these two Original Affections; We have, I think, something like a Demonstration, that all Morality in Practice is founded upon Self-Love. For by all this, I think, it appears pretty manifestly, that no Man can desire, or be under any Concern for, the Happiness of others, but where it makes a part of his own, either by the Pleasure and Satisfaction it naturally and immediately gives him, or the Hopes of future Benefit and Advantage to arise from it. So that the Supreme and Terminating Regard of the Mind is to its own Satisfaction or Enjoyment, arising one way or other, from the Happiness of others; and their Happiness becomes the Object of Desire, only as it is a Means to procure the said Satisfaction or Enjoyment. For, suppose the Mind to take no Pleasure, receive no Delight, or Satisfaction, from the Happiness of another, Directly, or Indirectly, Immediately, or Meditately, and then his Happiness cannot move Desire at all, because Desire is only an Uneasiness, arising from the want of some Satisfaction, which from his Happiness, it is supposed the Mind cannot have, and therefore cannot desire it. And by consequence, tho' the Love of Benevolence be usually distinguished from the Love of Desire, or Enjoyment, yet in Effect it is but a peculiar Kind of it, under the Disguise of a Concern only for the Happiness of others; whereas it is really but a Concern for the Happiness of others, in order to secure our own.

781 But to give the Reader still further Satisfaction, if possible, upon this Head, I shall consider the Love of Benevolence, with respect to the various Circumstances of its Object, whereby that Disposition of the Mind may be more or less raised. With Regard to Persons of eminent Virtue, a bright and compleat Moral Character, or one not very compleat, if it is remarkably distinguished by a Benevolent, Generous Disposition of Soul, makes a delightful Picture, in the Minds of such as are not absolutely void of all Humanity, or degenerated into Brutes: nay, perhaps the most Degenerate and Brutish feel a Pleasure in the Contemplation of such a Character; and if so, the Pleasure that accompanies the View of an eminently Virtuous, or Benevolent Character, must have its Foundation in the Original Frame and Constitution of a human Mind, so made as to be necessarily affected with a Perception of Pleasure from such a Character, antecedent to all Reflection there-

upon, and so separate from all Views and Prospects of Interest, or Advantage therefrom, as our Author endeavours very ingeniously to make out, and has indeed, I think, rendered very probable, and therefore I allow it, as a common Principle betwixt us, and shall argue upon the Supposition of it. The Mind then is naturally pleased, or affected with Delight in the Contemplation of an eminently Virtuous, or Benevolent Character ; it likewise perceives a Satisfaction, in observing the Union of Virtue and Happiness in Life, and this as naturally as the other, as likewise an Uneasiness or Trouble, from the observed Union of Virtue and Misery. The Sense of Pleasure or Pain upon these Occasions, rises naturally in the Mind, without any View to Self-Interest, tho' it be capable of increase from thence too, as will appear by and by. The Mind having once from Experience felt the Pleasure that eminent Virtue in Prosperity gives, as likewise the Uneasiness, that Virtue in Distress is apt necessarily to raise in it, receives from that Experience a Benevolent Disposition towards a Person that excels in Virtue, or a Readiness to contribute to his Happiness and Prosperity, in order to the Enjoyment of the Satisfaction arising from it.

782 The Case is the same here, as in the Love of Things Inanimate, capable by their Consumption, or Use, of contributing to our Enjoyment ; as for Instance, of Fruit, or agreeable Diet. The Pleasure received by the Taste, does not arise from Views of Self-Interest : that's Nonsense to say : but the Love of the Fruit, or Meat visibly does, since it is nothing but a Disposition to enjoy them, arising from a Reflection upon the Pleasure felt in Eating, and that Pleasure is the sole Reason and Foundation of that Disposition, or Love ; which Love by consequence is founded upon a Regard to Self, or Self-Satisfaction. Thus too the Mind is Conscious of a Pleasure, arising from the observed Union of Virtue and Happiness, and of Uneasiness from their Separation, and this without the mixture of any Selfish Views : but then the Disposition of the Mind to Actions of Civility and Kindness, in favour of the eminently Virtuous, arises from the Reflection upon the said Pleasure and Pain, and the performance of those Actions is visibly intended, in order to avoid the Pain, and procure the Pleasure, as will appear still more evidently from the following Considerations.

783 If the Mind, upon the Observation of an Eminently Virtuous Character, apprehends any Danger from thence to its Interests ; if the Person that appears under that amiable Form, carries away the Favour of the World from us, or but robs us of the Pre-eminence we aspire to in their Esteem, and by that means baulks us in our Expectations of rising, or making our Fortune in the World, we are then commonly so far from conceiving a favourable Disposition towards him, or being ready to perform the good Offices of Life for him, that we are apt to be quite differently affected, to Envy, Murmur, and Repine at his Fame and good Fortune; and, why so, but that the Prejudice of our Interests being constantly united with the Representation of his prosperous Circumstances to the Mind, makes the Picture disagreeable, and excites Pain instead of Pleasure ? And therefore the Mind wanting the Temptation, arising upon other Occasions, from the Delight attending upon the View of Virtue and Happiness united, and disgusted moreover with the disagreeable Ideas, that always go along with that View, not only waves all thought of any Act of Benevolence, but receives a Disposition to the contrary Acts of Ill Nature and Mischief, in order to lay the Pain and Disturbance, arising from the uncomfortable Consideration of a Person in the Possession of Happiness, to the prejudice of our own. Now let Circumstances so alter, as that we become fully satisfyed, we receive no Prejudice in our Interests, nor are in the least danger of receiving any from him, and then the Consideration of Happiness and Virtue united in his Person, having no longer any Association of Disagreeable Ideas, gives the Mind a Pleasure, to secure which it becomes disposed to such Actions as are proper to preserve, or improve that Union, in proportion to the Delight and Satisfaction received from the Contemplation thereof. And thus Benevolence rises and falls with the Prospect of Pleasure, or Enjoyment, in the Expressions thereof.

784 But tho' the Case be commonly thus, yet it is not always so ; for the Minds of Men are not constantly and invariably disposed, to Envy and Repine at the Success and Happiness of a Topping Virtuous Character, tho' it eclipses their Glory, and affects them in their Interests and Designs. There are Men found generous enough, in spight of any such Disappointment, to rejoice in the Success attending upon any Noble Character in Virtue, and agreeably thereto, are strongly disposed to all the good Offices of

Humanity and Kindness, in its Favour, which is easily accounted for, from the Principle of Self-Love, in the following manner.

785 Where the Mind is fully perswaded of the Being of a God, and his Goodness, and that he is resolved to reward Virtue, and punish Vice, in a future State, and is, from the Influence of that Principle, and a watchful Conduct, arrived at a Habit of Virtue; there a Sense of Duty and the Hopes of Eternal Happiness from the Performance, keep the Mind in a proper Frame to receive the Delight, which the Observation of Virtue in happy Circumstances naturally gives, where no disgusting Ideas mix with it. For by this means, the Mind easily seperates all Regard to its own little Interests in this Life, from the said Contemplation, and instead thereof, the most lovely of all Ideas, God, and his Favour, with endless and inconceivable Bliss hereafter, intermix with the otherwise amiable Prospect, and render it still the more Delightful and Affecting, and so necessarily produce in the Mind the Disposition, or Love, of Benevolence.

786 The same Views and Considerations visibly operate in the same manner, in Favour of Virtue in Distress, to dispose the Mind to Acts of Benevolence for its Relief, tho' that may appear prejudicial to us in this Life. The Hope of future Happiness from such a Conduct, justles out all Regard to a present Interest, and by mixing with the Thought or View of the possible Recovery of Virtue from Distress, renders that Prospect still more agreeable and delightful, than it is in it self; and by consequence pushes the Mind strongly towards such Actions, as appear proper to contribute to the said Recovery, and give the Mind a more compleat Enjoyment, in the Contemplation of the actual Union of Virtue and Happiness.

787 But if to the Views of Happiness in another Life, be added a probable Prospect of Interest in this, from such Acts of Benevolence, the Mind receives still a stronger Disposition towards them, and is the more delighted in the Practice thereof. For the Prospect of Happiness is always attended with Pleasure more or less, generally in Proportion to the Happiness expected, and the Certainty of the Expectation. I think it is very visible in all these several Cases, how Self-Love operates to the producing of Benevolence, and that it is entirely founded upon a View to Pleasure or Enjoyment.

788 As to parental Affection, or that benign and tender Disposition of Parents for their Children, that is likewise founded in Self-Love. I grant indeed it is natural too, as it proceeds from such a natural Constitution of Mind, as renders the Parent necessarily and unavoidably affected with a Sense of Pleasure and Satisfaction, in the Happiness of a Child, and Pain in its Misery. From this natural Connection of the Happiness and Misery of a Parent, with that of the Child, arises that strong Disposition in the former, to all Actions apprehended proper to promote the Good and Welfare of the Child, because his own depends upon it, and he can have no Ease or Quiet in a different Conduct: But take away this strong Connection betwixt the Happiness and Misery of the Child and the Parent, and the passionate Fondness of the latter for the former will vanish at the same Time, and then no more Benevolence will be left towards the Child than others, except what may arise from a Sense of Duty, and the Hopes of a future Reward, or other Advantages distinct from the Pleasure, naturally attending the Happiness of a Child.

789 Benevolence to Friends, or such as have discovered a great Degree of Kindness and Affection for us, comes next to be considered. This is likewise founded upon Self-Love, and proceeds from it. I do not mean, that it is always or entirely built upon the Views of future Benefits, or further Kindnesses to be received, by the Means of it, or the Spur it may give to the Affection of a Friend, because it is visible, this Disposition of Mind towards a Friend, a hearty Concern for his Welfare, often-times continues, when all Prospects of such Advantage from it, are at an End, and we never expect it will be in his Power to make any Returns, or that any Body will do it for him. But then the concomitant Pleasure of Gratitude, the Hopes of Applause from Men, or a Reward from God, for a Conduct so agreeable to his Will, visibly support and keep up that Disposition. Because 'tis evident to Observation, that Benevolence is stronger or weaker, according as the Mind is more or less influenced by Considerations of that kind, which plainly shews, they are the Cause of it. 'Tis therefore, in this Case, for the Sake of the Pleasure naturally attending upon Acts of Gratitude, for the Sake of Applause from Men, or a Reward from God, or all together, that Men retain a benevolent Disposition for a ruined Friend, ruined beyond all

probable Prospect, of his being ever in a Condition, to return any Kindness done him.

790 As to the Rest of Mankind, that come not under the Denomination of Persons eminently Virtuous, Children, or Friends, Benevolence, so far as it is natural, runs very low, and where it is very conspicuous, is either owing to a Desire of Fame, and the Advantages arising from it, or Religious Considerations. In the latter Cases, it is visibly founded upon Self-Love; and so far as it is the Effect of the Original Mould and Constitution of the Mind, is practised for the Sake of the concomitant Pleasure depending upon that Constitution of Mind, and flowing from it, and so is still, even in that Case, supported and upheld, by a Desire of Pleasure, which is Self-Love.

791 Thus I have run through Benevolence in all its great Branches, and shewn, I think, how it flows from a Regard to Self-Satisfaction or Happiness, and that it can not possibly be otherwise, because nothing can be the Object of Inclination but Pleasure, nothing the Object of Aversion but Pain, or the supposed Means of producing them. Let us now return to our Author's Paragraph, and see how it will abide the Application.

'As to the Love of Benevolence, the very Name excludes Self-Interest¹.' Ans. Not at all: it intimates indeed a Regard for others, but does not exclude a Regard to Self, unless those two Regards were inconsistent, which 'tis visible they are not, but have so far a necessary Connection, that the former cannot subsist without the latter, but is founded entirely upon it. And Self-Love, or a Regard to a Man's own Happiness, which is inseperable from his Nature, will oblige him to have a Regard to, and Concern for, the Happiness of others, where they have by Nature a Connection, or a Regard to the latter, is apprehended necessary, by the Appointment of God, in order to secure the former in a future State. And in no Case can the Mind be affected with a Concern for the Happiness of others (which is only another Name for Benevolence) but where it is brought home to it self, and some way or other, either Immediately, or by Consequence, made a part of its own, in Reality or Supposition. The contrary visibly implies a Contradiction, as has been shewn above.

¹ Above, § 92.

792 ‘We never call that Man Benevolent, who is in Fact useful to others, but at the same time, only intends his own Interest, without any Desire of, or Delight in the Happiness of others¹.’ Ans. Very true. But suppose a Man intends his own Interest, and at the same time is desirous of, and delights in the Good of others, what do we call him then? Whatever our Author may think fit to call him, the World, I am sure, call such a Man Benevolent.

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793 ‘The most useful Action imaginable, loses all Appearance of Benevolence, as soon as we discern it only flowed from Self-Love, or Interest².’ Answ. Benevolence is only a Disposition, or Inclination of the Mind to Action, and therefore in strict and proper speaking, no Action can be called Benevolence: But however, I allow, what, I suppose, the Author meant to say, that a Disposition to do Good to others, arising only from Views of Interest, is not called Benevolence, provided the Word Interest be here taken in the Sense it is always used in, when the Discourse is of Benevolence, or Disinterested Love, that is, for the Advantages and Conveniences of this Life, exclusive of that Pleasure and Satisfaction, necessarily and immediately attending upon Benevolent Actions, considered in themselves, without Regard to any Beneficial Consequences, that may follow from them. As, suppose a Man does a Kindness for another, purely in hopes of obtaining Money, Honour, or a Mistress; he has, I grant, no Title to the Name of Benevolent; but if he does it, because he receives a Satisfaction from a Consideration of his Welfare, a Pleasure from the very Action, separate from all Views of that kind, he is then called Benevolent, notwithstanding he acts most certainly for the sake of the concomitant Pleasure. The Disposition of Mind, from which he acts, is allowed to be a Disinterested Love: which evidently shews, that the Term Interest, does not, in the use of it upon this Occasion, extend to that Concomitant Pleasure. So that, tho’ a Man proposes that Pleasure, and certainly designs by his Action to obtain it, yet he is not therefore call’d a Self-ended Man. He Acts upon as Disinterested a Principle, as it’s conceived possible for human Nature to act. Our Author, as appears from

¹ Above, § 92.

² Ibid.

the Paragraph under Examination, will not allow a Man to be Benevolent, that does not Act with a Desire of, or Delight in the Happiness, or Good of others: But how a Man can Act with a Desire of, and delight in the Good of others, and yet not propose to himself the Enjoyment of that Delight, will puzzle, I doubt, a very good Philosopher to make out.

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794 The Author has the following Words, ‘There is one Objection against Disinterested Love, which occurs from considering, that nothing so effectually excites our Love towards Rational Agents, as their Beneficence to us, whence we are led to imagine, that our Love of Persons, as well as irrational Objects, flows entirely from Self-Interest. But let us here examine our selves more narrowly: Do we only love the Beneficent, because it is our Interest to love them? Or do we choose to love them, because our Love is a Means of procuring their Bounty? If it be so, then we could indifferently love any Character, even to obtain the Bounty of a third Person, or we could be bribed by a third Person, to love the greatest Villain heartily, as we may be bribed to external Offices. Now this is plainly impossible!.’

In Order to unravel the Perplexity of this Period, and lay open the Mistake of it, I must beg the Reader to remember, that Benevolence is nothing but a Disposition to do Good to others, arising more or less from a Delight in their Welfare. This is the Love of Benevolence, which our Author either is, or should be, I am sure, talking of here. And this we must have a Care of confounding, as he seems sometimes to do, either with its Cause on the one Hand, that Complacency or Delight in the Good of others, from whence it has its Original, or with its Fruits and Effects on the other Hand, the outward Actions or Expressions of it; and then all will be easy, and it will appear, I think, very evidently, that the Love of Benevolence towards rational Agents, occasioned by their Beneficence, flows entirely from Self-Love, or Self-Interest, if our Author means to extend the Word Interest, as his Argument requires he should, to what he calls the concomitant

795 Pleasure of Virtue. For, 1. The Kindness of others towards us makes us think of them with Pleasure, think of their being Happy

¹ Above, § 98.

with Complacency and Satisfaction. This has its Foundation in the Original Frame and Constitution of the Mind, which is so made, that it can not help being so affected, and therefore is not matter of Choice, but the immediate and necessary Effect of the Operation of Beneficence upon the Mind ; which Affection, tho' it may receive an Improvement from the Hopes of further Benefits in the same Way, yet 'tis plain, that Pleasure or Complacency will arise in the Mind without them, because we are sensible, from Experience, it does, and will continue, and very strong too, when all Expectations of that Kind are at an End. This Perception of Delight, this Complacency in thinking upon a Benefactor and his Welfare, which is called the Love of Complacency, is disinterested, as certainly as the Perception of Pleasure in the Smell of a Rose, or the Taste of 796 a Peach. But then 2. The Mind finding from Experience, that the Welfare of its Benefactor is capable of giving it a very considerable Satisfaction, in Order to enjoy that Satisfaction, becomes strongly disposed to the good Offices of Kindness, Relief, Support, in one Word, to contribute in any Way or Kind it conveniently can, to the Pleasure and Enjoyment of its Friend. And this Disposition is the Love of Benevolence, and very distinct from the Satisfaction that gave Rise to it, which is called the Love of Complacency. Which, however in a loose and popular Way of speaking, they may be confounded under the common Name of Love, yet in a philosophical Discourse upon the Subject of Love as a Moral Disposition of Mind, ought carefully to be distinguished : which if our Author had done, he would not have fallen into the Mistake, which I apprehend he has. The one, that is, the Love of Complacency, as it is the immediate and necessary Product of Beneficence upon the Mind, does not arise from Views of Interest, any more than the Relish of an Oyster upon the Palate. They are both of them the necessary Product of a certain established Order of Nature, antecedent to all Reflection : But a Disposition to Acts of Kindness, which is the Love of Benevolence, does as certainly arise from a Reflection upon the Pleasure to be had in the Happiness of a Friend, and a Desire to enjoy it, as a Man is disposed to eat Oysters from a Reflection upon their agreeable Gust and a Desire to enjoy the Pleasure thereof. So that the Love of a Benefactor does as certainly arise from Self-Love, as the Love of Oysters.

797 Now we are prepared to answer our Author's Question, ' Do we only love the Beneficent, because it is our Interest to love them ? '

Ans. No, if by Love be meant that of Complacency, which I doubt the Author, in penning this Question, for want of a little Attention, did in his Thoughts confound with that of Benevolence, and because the former is disinterested, unwarily let that Thought slide upon the latter. But if by Love we are to understand that of Benevolence, which he is in this Place expresly treating of, then the Meaning of the Question in other Words is this, Are we disposed to do Good to others, only because it is our Interest to be so disposed? or rather because it is our Interest to do them Good? Ans. No, if by Interest be meant what is usually meant, as I have already observed, when the Discourse is about disinterested Love, that is, the Benefits and Advantages of this Life, that may arise from the Expression of our Love by Acts of Kindness, exclusive of that Pleasure, which flows from those Acts immediately, without any View to further Advantage to be received from them. In this Sense of Interest we do not love the Beneficent, only because it is our Interest to be kind or beneficent to them again, that is, we are not disposed to do Good to them, only because we expect the like from them or others again, or because it will some Way or other turn to our Interest: No, we are strongly disposed to do Good oftentimes without any such Views; but where those Views do interpose, they make us take still the more Delight in the Welfare of our Benefactors, and so heighten in us the Disposition or Inclination, to Acts of Beneficence proper to promote it. But if our Author means under the Term Interest to include the immediate Pleasure, necessarily arising from Actions of Benevolence, without any Respect to Consequences, which 'tis plain his Argument obliges him to, and he must mean, or he means nothing to his Purpose, then the Answer to his Question, is, Yes; We do love the Beneficent, only because it is our Interest to be kind to them, or we are disposed to do Good to the Beneficent, only because it is our Interest, or we find our Account in it, at least in the Enjoyment of the immediate Pleasure attending upon Actions of Benevolence, if not from further Advantage flowing from them. And this appears to me as certain, as that a Man ordinarily eats Fruit, for the sake of the Pleasure to be had in the eating of it.

798 His next Question is, ' Do we choose to love them (the Beneficent)

because our Love is the Means of procuring their Bounty ?¹ This is, I think, a very strange Question, wherein Love is confounded with its Effects, or benevolent Actions. And because the latter are Matter of Choice, the former is supposed to be so too ; or at least this Supposition is put upon the Objectors, as an Absurdity their Objection implies ; which yet, 'tis visible, it does not ; for a Man may maintain that Love rises from Views of Interest, as it's certain it oftentimes does, without being obliged, in order to make good that Doctrine, to suppose or hold Love to be the Matter of Choice. Nor did ever any Body in a philosophical Discourse, I believe, talk of love as Matter of direct and immediate Choice. 'Tis true the Disposition of Mind necessary to render it capable of that Passion, may in some Cases be originally owing to Acts of the Will : But to talk of choosing to love, is representing Love as the immediate Effect of an Act of the Will ; which is very unphilosophical ; and if he ask'd the Question seriously, shews plainly, that he confounds Love, which is only an Affection of the Mind, with the Actions flowing from it : But if he ask'd it only comically, to insinuate that the Objectors must, to make good their Objection, be forced to the Use of such absurd unphilosophical Dialect, I humbly conceive he is under a great Mistake, as may in part appear already, and will more fully, before we have done with this Question. Love too is represented as a Means to procure Bounty ; which is another Mistake, occasioned by the confounding Love with Actions proceeding from it. For Love being an invisible Disposition of the Mind, is a Means to procure nothing ; but outward Actions are, whether they proceed from real Love, or are only pretended so to do, artfully enough to deceive.

799 The proper Answer then to this remarkable Question is, I think, this. No, we do not choose to love the Beneficent, because our Love is the Means of procuring their Bounty. To say we do, carries as much Absurdity in it, as can well be expressed in so few Words. Love is a Passion of the Mind arising from Reflection upon its proper Object, Pleasure, or the Means of procuring it, and is not Matter of Choice. We are not at Liberty to love as we list ; and therefore where Love rises in the Mind, it is not the Product of any Act of the Will exerted at that time, but a necessary Effect

¹ Above, § 98.

consequent upon the Appearance of Objects to the Mind, as capable of contributing to our Delight or Satisfaction. The Sense of Benefits received, gives the Mind a Pleasure in reflecting upon the Author of them, disposes it necessarily to receive a Complacency, from the Consideration of his Happiness or Welfare, and Pain from his Misery or Misfortunes. From which the Mind perceiving a Connection betwixt the Good of its Benefactor and its own Quiet, and that it can not help sympathizing in some Measure with him, is further necessarily disposed to contribute to his Welfare. This Disposition to favour and befriend him, is the necessary Product of that necessary Connection betwixt his Happiness, and our own : But the Mind is generally free to comply with this Disposition or not, and so Actions conformable thereto are free, and Matter of Choice. Which being in a vulgar way of Talking called Love, our Author, has, I fear, been thereby misled to ascribe that to Love, which belongs not to it, in the strict and proper Meaning of the Word ; but only to the outward Expressions of it. And how he came to suppose, as his Question seems to do, that if our Love of the Beneficent flows from Self-Love, it must be the immediate Product of an Act of the Will, or a Matter of Choice, I cannot imagine. Those that will have all Love of Benevolence for Persons to proceed from Self-Love, have no Occasion to support that Principle by any such wild Notion. What our Author therefore has here taken for granted, he ought to have proved ; and 'till he has, the Objectors are not at all affected by his Conclusion.

800 There is therefore no Foundation for saying, ' If our Love was not disinterested, we could indifferently love any Character, to obtain the Bounty of a third Person ; or we could be bribed by a third Person, to love the greatest Villain heartily¹' because there is no Truth, or the least Appearance of any, in the Supposition from whence that Inference is drawn, nor are the Objectors obliged to allow it, but may consistently enough, with their Notion of the Love of Persons flowing from Self-Love, maintain that it is not therefore perfectly Arbitrary, or Matter of Choice. A Sense of Kindnesses done us, where it gives the Mind a Pleasure in thinking of its Benefactor and his Welfare, which it usually does, produces that Effect necessarily, and independently upon the Will, in

¹ Above, § 9³.

Consequence of a certain established Order of Nature for that Purpose. From this Sense of Pleasure in the Good of its Benefactor, arising necessarily from his Kindness, flows and necessarily too a Disposition to do him Good, for the Sake of the Pleasure attending it. But the Thought of the Happiness of a Villain considered as such, being uncapable of giving the Mind any Pleasure, it is impossible it should love him as such, because Love is only a Disposition to do Good to another, from a Pleasure in his Happiness, which in this Case is wanting, and from the Nature of the Mind must be so. Nor will a Bribe produce that Pleasure, any more than it will make us feel the Relish of Melons in a Piece of Touch-wood. A Bribe may prevail with a Man to perform such Actions, as Benevolence will produce ; but will never make him feel a Pleasure from Objects, which they are not by Nature fitted to give. A Sense of Kindnesses received, disposes the Mind to think upon its Benefactor and his Happiness with Pleasure. Under the Character of a Friend, he is an Object fitted by Nature to raise Delight, especially when considered as happy. This Delight in his Being and Happiness gives the Mind a Disposition to such Actions as tend to secure, promote, or encrease it, for the sake of that Delight that attends them. But how will it hence follow ; That, because the Mind is necessarily affected with a Delight in the Welfare of its Benefactor, and for the sake of that Delight disposed to do him Good, it may for a Bribe be so affected and disposed towards one that is no Benefactor ? May it not with as much Reason be said, that, because a Man finds an agreeable Taste in Bread, and is from thence disposed to eat it, he may for a Bribe find the same in a Brick-bat, and swallow that too ? The Happiness of a Villain consider'd as such, is not an Object naturally fitted to raise Delight in the Mind ; a Bribe may dispose us to act in his Favour, but cannot raise that Delight, and by Consequence cannot produce Love, which is an Affection of the Mind, proceeding only from that Delight.

801 Thus, I think, it appears pretty plainly, that, notwithstanding our Love of the Beneficent, flows intirely from Self-Interest, if the Word Interest be extended to that Pleasure, which naturally arises from the Happiness of a Friend, without any View to future Advantage from it; yet it does not follow from thence, that we

might for a Bribe indifferently love any Character, even the greatest Villain. Before I take Leave of this Question, I must observe, that tho' we should allow our Author's Reasoning to be just, yet it only proves that we cannot love the Beneficent, from the Hopes of procuring their Bounty by it, or rather (to speak more properly) by the outward Expressions of it. But still falls short of what he proposed, which was to shew that our Love of Persons flows not at all from Self-Interest: For if there be an Interest, besides their Bounty, to be obtained, by the Practice of Benevolence, as he himself allows there is, viz. a concomitant Pleasure, inseperable from it, tho' no further Bounty be expected, his Argument does not reach it, and the Disposition to Acts of Benevolence may arise from a View to that Pleasure, and so flow from Self-Interest notwithstanding.

* * * * *

802 As to his declaring, 'That without acknowledging some other Principle of Action in Rational Agents besides Self-Love, he sees no Foundation to expect Beneficence, or Rewards from God or Man, further than it is the Interest of the Benefactor¹.' I agree there does not appear any Foundation for such an Expectation, any further than it is the Interest of the Benefactor, if he includes in the Word Interest, the Pleasure or Delight of doing Good, arising immediately from the Action it self, without Regard to further Consequences from it. As to Men, I think I have made the Matter pretty evident, there is none at all. And, I confess, I see no Reason or Foundation for the Expectation of Beneficence or Rewards from God, if he do not Delight, or take a Pleasure in doing Good. Without this Supposition, I understand not for my part, in what Sense he could be called a good Being. The Scripture, it's certain, represents him, and in very strong Terms, as a Being that delights in Mercy and Loving-Kindness; and why we should not understand those and the like Expressions literally, I know not; and if I am in a Mistake, should be very glad to be better informed. No Body doubts, I suppose, but he is a very happy Being; and why may not one part of his Happiness be thought to consist in a Delight to do Good? I hardly believe, our Author will be able to shew any absurd Consequence to follow from such a Supposition.

¹ Above, § 102.

However, by allowing to Men no Motive to Acts of Beneficence, from Pleasure, or Advantage of any kind, either in this Life or another, he has indeed taken away all Motive whatever to any such Actions, and left them as perfectly indifferent to the Mind, as the wagging of a Finger, or any other the most trifling Action imaginable. Men may indeed perform an Act of Beneficence, as they may move a Finger, or shut their Eyes, by an Absolute Arbitrary Act of the Will, without any Reason for it; but when all Regard to Pleasure is taken away, there is nothing left to move, or engage the Mind to Act constantly in that Way, as oft as proper Occasions present; and consequently upon his Principle there could be no such thing as Benevolence at all: and Virtue, in his Notion of it, is not to be expected from Mankind, as having no Foundation in Nature.

803 Our Author proceeds to start and answer another Objection against his Doctrine, in the following Words. ‘The last and only remaining Objection against what has been said, is this, that perhaps Virtue is pursued because of the Concomitant Pleasure. But may we not justly question, whether all Virtue be pleasant? or whether we are not determined to some Amiable Actions, that are not pleasant¹?’ Answ. These last Words, to my thinking, manifestly imply a Contradiction; for I desire our Author, or any one else, to shew, how any thing can appear amiable to the Mind, that does not please it; and how any Thing can be said to please it, that does not give it a Pleasure. So far therefore as any Actions are Amiable, so far they are Pleasing and Delightful. And you may as well talk of a Face’s being Amiable, that gives no Delight at all to the Beholder, as of Actions being Amiable, that give no Delight to the Agent in the Performance. And I wonder what other Definition can be given of an Amiable Action, than only such as raises Delight in the Beholder, or Hearer of it, but much more in the Performer. There may be Pain or Trouble attend the Performance, but there must be a Pleasure too, in the Consideration of it, if it be Amiable. You’ll say, perhaps, the Pain may much over-ballance the Pleasure; I grant it, and in that Case, Moral Sense will infallibly be baffled, and therefore is not sufficient for the Support of Morality.

804 ‘But all Virtue is not Pleasant²?’ I desire our Author to reconcile

¹ Above, § 103.

² Above, § 104.

this with his two Propositions, laid down by him as containing the Sum and Substance of his Doctrine upon Moral Good and Evil ; wherein he tells us, ‘That by a Superior Sense, which he calls a Moral One, we perceive a Pleasure in the Contemplation of some Actions in others, and are determined to love the Agent (and much more do we perceive Pleasure in being Conscious of having done such Actions our selves) and that what excites us to such Actions as we call Virtuous, is not an Intention to obtain the Concomitant Pleasure¹.’ Here, I think, all Virtuous Actions are supposed to give a Pleasure in the Contemplation ; and the more, if we are Conscious of having done them our selves : for he excepts none, nor does he any where suppose that the Moral Sense is Defective, or qualifies us to receive Pleasure in the Contemplation of some Virtuous Actions, and not in others.

805 Perhaps it may be said, that all Virtuous Actions are indeed Amiable, and therefore naturally give a Pleasure, but sometimes fail so to do, by reason of the Inattentiveness of the Mind in the hurry of Action, which yet the Mind pursues, tho’ attended with Pain. This is what the Author in Effect says in the following Words. ‘Now there are several Morally Amiable Actions, which flow from these Passions which are uneasy, such as Attempts of Relieving the Distressed, of Defending the Injured, of Repairing of Wrongs done by our selves. These Actions are often accompanied with no Pleasure in the mean time, nor have they any Subsequent Pleasure, except as they are Successful, unless it be that which may arise from calm Reflection, when the Passion is over, upon our having been in a Disposition, which to our Moral Sense appears Lovely and Good. But this Pleasure is never intended in the Heat of Action, nor is it any Motive exciting to it².’ Answ. No ! What is then intended in the Heat of Action, or what is the Motive exciting to it, if it be not Pleasure ? Is it the Pain or Trouble that attends the Action, that Excites and Allures to it ? is Pain so very inviting ? I am sorry so Ingenious an Author should seem to insinuate a Thing, so repugnant to Nature and common Sense. If the Mind pursues a painful Action, and appearing to be such, without the least View to Satisfaction, or Pleasure of any Kind, which the Author’s Argument requires him to say, and is the visible

¹ Above, § 72.

² Above, § 104.

Design of this Paragraph to maintain, it must then choose Pain for its own sake, that is, must be in Love with Pain: which whoever is, will have no reason to complain, if he is soundly Cudgelled by every one that meets him. I fear it will be thought an Argument of a desperate Cause, when such a Man as our Author is put to such a terrible Shift, such an unnatural Strain in the Defence of it. For what can be more Unnatural, or contrary to the common Experience of Mankind, than to assert, that the Mind of Man may be, and often is engag'd in Actions visibly attended with Pain and Uneasiness, without the least View to Pleasure or Satisfaction of any kind. Of this we may be very sure there never was so much as one Instance, since Heaven and Earth were made, nor ever will. In all Troublesome and Painful Actions, be they hot or Cold, the Mind has constantly a View to Pleasure of some sort or other; there is not the least Reason to suppose the contrary, nor does our Author alledge any; he only affirms it so to be, as being indeed necessary for the Support of his Hypothesis; but the Supposition has no Foundation at all, either in Reason or Experience. In the Troublesome and uneasy Actions of Relieving the Distressed, Defending the Injured, or Repairing Wrongs, the Mind is constantly supported, either by a Pleasure attending the View of those Actions, considered as Amiable, or the Prospect of being relieved from the Pain of Compassion, or of Security against Censure, apprehended from the Omission of those Actions, by the Hopes of Applause from Men, a Requital from the Parties Relieved, or their Friends, or a Reward from God. Is it at all likely that the Mind, notwithstanding these several Considerations naturally offer themselves, should not be excited by any one of them, but rush forward upon Pain and Trouble, without Fear or Wit, no Body knows why, nor wherefore? *Credat Judaeus Apella.*

- 806 But if all Virtue be not pleasant, some undoubtedly is, and then why may not that be pursued for the sake of the Concomitant Pleasure? I do not find our Author says any thing to this, nor can any thing, I fear, be said to it; for, I think, I may venture to challenge him, or any one else to shew, for what End the Moral Sense could be given us, if it was not to encourage and excite us to Virtue, by the immediate Pleasure it enables us to receive, in the Contemplation of Virtuous Actions, especially when performed by

our selves, or the Discovery it naturally invites and leads us to, of further Pleasure at a distance, likely to follow from them, in the natural course of Things in this Life, or by the Appointment of God in another. Set aside this Intention in bestowing the Moral Sense, and then let any one shew me what it is good for, or with what Design it could possibly be given. It appears altogether useless, any further than by a Prospect of Pleasure or Happiness, it influences the Mind to Virtuous Actions, proper for the procuring thereof. And our Author has employ'd his Pains, I think, to very little Purpose, in an Endeavour to establish his Doctrine of a Moral Sense, if the Pleasure it gives, serves not at all to excite us to Virtue, as he expresly asserts in his Second Proposition, and endeavours to maintain throughout this whole Second Section; but more especially and directly, in his Answer to this Objection against his Doctrine, drawn from the Concomitant Pleasure of Virtue. This is in Effect pulling down with one Hand, what he had built up with the other. He first takes Pains to shew there is a Moral Sense, and then labours with all his Might, to make it appear Useless and Insignificant.

807 The Doctrine of a Moral Sense, and a Natural Benevolence founded thereon, is a very pretty ingenious Speculation, which the World is obliged to our Author for; and has, in my Opinion, a good deal of Truth in it, tho' perhaps it may not be of that Universal Extent he pleads for: And the Use thereof appears to be this. That sudden and immediate Sense of Pleasure, arising from the View, or Observation of some sort of Actions, seperate from all Expectation of any Benefit to our selves from them, seems intended by the great Author of Nature, to invite Mankind to the Practice of Virtuous Actions, to turn and fix the Attention of the Mind upon them, in order to discover more completely their Tendency, and the natural Benefits and Advantages, that may reasonably be expected from them, by the Practitioners. This is the natural Effect of Beauty in any Object, to engage the Mind to view and observe it very carefully: And therefore the main Use of the Moral Sense, and the Principal Intention of Nature therein, seems to be, to put the Mind of Man upon the Hunt, to see if such Actions as appear at first sight Beautiful, may not be attended with greater Pleasures, than the first View presents. For tho' that first and sudden Pleasure, may of it self in some measure influence

the Mind to Action, yet that is utterly insufficient to support, or carry Mankind far in the Practice of Virtue; and if it had no other Support, Moral Sense considered as a Principle of Action, would be almost perpetually baffled by the Superior Allurements of Vice. No, Virtue receives a much greater Encouragement, from Pleasures expected to follow at a distance from the Practice of it, in this Life, or a future, than from the Concomitant Pleasure; and these the Moral Sense naturally leads to the Discovery of, by engaging the Attention of the Mind to survey such Actions, as appear naturally comely, on all sides: And thus may be of considerable use to restrain Mankind from being so Wicked, as otherwise they would be, and gives us Reason to admire at once, both the Wisdom and Goodness of its Author. But this likely and agreeable Speculation is all blasted, by our Author's unaccountable Notion of Virtue, which he makes to consist in a Disinterested Love of others, a Love seperated from all manner of Regard to Pleasure of any kind, Concomitant or Subsequent, in this Life or another. Which is out-doing the Stoicks themselves far away; for tho' they held Virtue sufficient for its own Reward; yet, I think, they did so, upon account of that inward Delight and Satisfaction, the Practice thereof naturally gives the Mind, and agreeably thereto pronounc'd their Wise Man alone completely happy; and from that Consideration recommended Virtue to Mankind. But our Author utterly disallows of all Respect to any Delight or Satisfaction whatsoever, as any proper Motive to Virtue; and therefore I should be glad to be inform'd, upon what Principle or Foundation he can pretend to recommend Virtue to the World. Others do it by constantly representing the Happiness to be expected from it in this Life, or another, or both; but, according to our Author, those are Poor, Mean, Selfish Considerations, absolutely inconsistent with the true Notion of Virtue, if a Man acts only from such Motives.

808 The Mind of Man is naturally fond of Pleasure, and always greedily embraces it, where it does not appear to interfere with the Enjoyment of a greater, or to be attended with any After-claps of Pain or Misery. Thus God Almighty has made Man, and can it be supposed, he has annexed a Sense of Pleasure to such Actions as he would have him perform, without any Intention, that he should be at all moved or excited by a Consideration thereof, to the Performance of those Actions? What a wild unaccountable

Supposition is this? May it not be as reasonable to suppose, God has annex'd a Perception of Pleasure, to the use of the ordinary Means of our Preservation, without any design we should thereby be wrought upon, to use them for that purpose? As that he has made Meat pleasant, but not to excite us by that Pleasure to Eat? That he has made the two Sexes agreeable to one another, but never meant, they should be disposed by that Agreeableness, to come together? The World has been always apt to think, and ever will, I imagine, that where God has, by an establish'd Order of Nature, annexed a Perception of Pleasure to the Performance of any Action, he thereby intended to excite Mankind generally to the performance of that Action, under proper Regulations and Restrictions. I might, I believe, venture to put the Issue of this whole Debate upon it, and yield our Author the Cause, if he can but shew, what use the Moral Sense can possibly be of, if it be not proper, and accordingly design'd, to excite us to Virtuous Actions, by that Pleasure it enables us to perceive in them, especially when performed by our selves, or the Discovery it may lead to of further Advantage from them. What is there in the Pleasure that Virtue makes us feel immediately, or gives a prospect of at a distance, for the Mind to boggle at, that it should not thereby be spurr'd on to Action in this Case, as well as others, where no Harm is apprehended from closing with the Pleasure in View?

809 He tells us in his Preface, 'That the Author of Nature has made Virtue a lovely Form, to excite our Pursuit of it.' This has both Sense and Truth in it; but then how shall we reconcile it with his Declaration, 'That what excites us to those Actions which we call Virtuous, is not an Intention to obtain even this sensible Pleasure,' arising from this lovely Form, especially when in our own Possession? Has God given Virtue this lovely Form, on purpose to excite us to the Pursuit of it, and are we neither excited by it, nor ought to be, because it is sordid and selfish to act upon such a Principle, and descrves not the Name of Virtue? Or are we excited by it, but without any Intention of obtaining the sensible Pleasure the Loveliness of its Form is fitted to give us? Make that out, how Beauty can allure and excite to Action, and the Mind have at the same time no Intention in the least, of obtaining the Pleasure that Beauty gives.

810 'An honest Farmer will tell you, that he studies the Preservation

and Happiness of his Children, and loves them without any Design of Good to himself¹? Ans. How can that be, when he will be infallibly miserable if he does not? He proposes perhaps no Good to himself, but that Satisfaction which necessarily arises from a Sense of their Preservation and Happiness; but that is a Good so great, that he must be exceedingly uneasy without it; a Sense of which most certainly determines him to study the Good of his Children. A Man may as well say, that in labouring to prevent the Gout, Stone, or any other Distemper, he proposes no Good to himself, because he expects no Accession of Wealth, Honour, or Fame thereby, tho' it be visible he labours in that manner for the Pleasure of Health, and to avoid the Pain and Disturbance of the Distemper he fears. Just so do Parents labour for the Good of their Children, for the Sake of the Pleasure they receive from a Sense of their Welfare, and to avoid that Sorrow and Affliction, their Misery would unavoidably give them. And this was wisely so ordered by the Author of Nature, to oblige Parents to take Care of their Children, for their own Sakes, because they find it impossible to be easy upon any other Terms.

811 ‘But his Love to his Child,’ says our Author, ‘makes him affected with his Pleasures and Pains. This Love then is antecedent to the Conjunction of Interest, and the Cause of it, not the Effect².’ Ans. This, I humbly conceive, is a great and fundamental Mistake. In no Sense of the Word, Love, can it be said to make the Parent affected with the Pleasures of his Child, or to be the Cause of that Affection: because the Love of Complacency is that very Affection, and not the Cause of it. And the Love of Benevolence in a Parent for his Child, being nothing but a strong Disposition, or passionate Inclination, to preserve and provide for its Happiness, is the Effect, and not the Cause of that Affection, which our Author calls a Conjunction of Interest; but I rather choose to call a natural Connection betwixt the Happiness of the Child and its Parent, by which that of the latter is rendered dependent upon the former. And it is a strange Inversion of the Order of Nature to imagine, that the Disposition in the Parent to seek the Child’s Good, is the Cause of that Connection, when ’tis as clear as Sun-shine, that the latter is the Cause of the former: And the Father is so disposed, because

¹ Above, § 106.

² Ibid.

he finds by Experience, there is such a Connection : The Cause of which is in the unknown Frame and Constitution of the Mind, which no Body can account for, any more than why the Smell of a Rose should be sweet, and that of *Assa Foetida* otherwise.

812 The Case is manifestly thus. The Great and Wise God designing, for very good Reasons no doubt, that Man should be born into the World in a very weak and helpless Condition, and not arrive at such a Use of his Reason, as is sufficient for his own Guidance and Direction, in the Management of himself and his Affairs, but by a gradual and slow Process, has laid Parents under an Obligation, to take Care of, and provide for, conduct and govern their Children, till they are capable of doing so much for themselves. But because this was like to prove a tedious Task, and the Performance not to be expected from a Sense of Duty, which the thoughtless Part of Mankind would want, and the wiser not be sufficiently influenced by, to undertake, or substantially execute such a terrible Piece of Drudgery, he has thought fit so to mould and fashion the Human Mind, that the Parents by a strange and surprizing Sympathy, should be very deeply affected with the Pleasures and Pains of their Offspring, receive a most wonderful Satisfaction in the former, and as terrible a Disturbance from the latter, and so be obliged by the very Principle of Self-Love, to take Care of their Issue, and provide for their Happiness, in order to secure their own. From all which, I think it is very evident, that Natural Affection, or the strong Benevolence in Parents towards their Children, arises from the pleasure and pain their happiness and misery necessarily and unavoidably give them, and so is founded in Self-Love ; or that the Reason why Parents love their Children so much, that is, are so strongly inclined to study their Welfare, is, because they love themselves, and are invincibly disposed to pursue their own Happiness. And it is a Wonder indeed, how a Person of our Author's Parts could miss a Thing so very apparent.

RALPH CUDWORTH

A Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality

[Written before 1688. First published 1731. Reprinted here from the posthumous first edition.]



BOOK I.

CHAPTER II.

813 1. WHEREFORE in the first Place, it is a Thing which we shall very easily demonstrate, That Moral Good and Evil, Just and Unjust, Honest and Dishonest, (if they be not meer Names without any Signification, or Names for nothing else, but Willed and Commanded, but have a Reality in Respect of the Persons obliged to do and avoid them) cannot possibly be Arbitrary things, made by Will without Nature; because it is Universally true, That things are what they are, not by Will but by Nature. As for Example, Things are White by Whiteness, and Black by Blackness, Triangular by Triangularity, and Round by Rotundity, Like by Likeness, and Equal by Equality, that is, by such certain Natures of their own. Neither can Omnipotence itself (to speak with Reverence) by meer Will make a Thing White or Black without Whiteness or Blackness; that is, without such certain Natures, whether we consider them as Qualities in the Objects without us according to the Peripatetical Philosophy, or as certain Dispositions of Parts in respect of Magnitude, Figure, Site and Motion, which beget those Sensations or Phantasms of White and Black in us. Or, to instance in Geometrical Figures, Omnipotence itself

cannot by meer Will make a Body Triangular, without having the Nature and Properties of a Triangle in it ; That is, without having three Angles equal to two Right ones, nor Circular without the Nature of a Circle ; that is, without having a Circumference Equidistant every where from the Center or Middle Point. Or lastly, to instance in things Relative only ; Omnipotent Will cannot make Things Like or Equal one to another, without the

814 Natures of Likeness and Equality. The Reason whereof is plain, because all these Things imply a manifest Contradiction ; That things should be what they are not. And this is a Truth fundamentally Necessary to all Knowledge, that Contradicteries cannot be true : For otherwise, nothing would be certainly true or false. Now things may as well be made White or Black by meer Will, without Whiteness or Blackness, Equal and Unequal, without Equality and Inequality, as Morally Good and Evil, Just and Unjust, Honest and Dishonest, *Debita* and *Illicita*, by meer Will, without any Nature of Goodness, Justice, Honesty. For though the Will of God be the Supreme Efficient Cause of all things, and can produce into Being or Existence, or reduce into Nothing what it pleaseth, yet it is not the Formal Cause of any Thing besides itself, as the Schoolmen have determined, in these Words,¹ That God himself cannot supply the Place of a formal Cause : And therefore it cannot supply the Formal Cause, or Nature of Justice or Injustice, Honesty or Dishonesty. Now all that we have hitherto said amounts to no more than this, that it is impossible any Thing should Be by Will only, that is, without a Nature or Entity, or that the Nature and Essence of any thing should be Arbitrary.

815 2. And since a Thing cannot be made any thing by meer Will without a Being or Nature, every Thing must be necessarily and immutably determined by its own Nature, and the Nature of things be that which it is, and nothing else. For though the Will and Power of God have an Absolute, Infinite and Unlimited Command upon the Existences of all Created things to make them to be, or not to be at Pleasure ; yet when things exist, they are what they are, This or That, Absolutely or Relatively, not by Will or Arbitrary Command, but by the Necessity of their own Nature. There is no such thing as an Arbitrarius Essence, Mode or Relation, that may

¹ Deum ipsum non posse supplere locum Causae formalis.

be made indifferently any Thing at Pleasure: for an Arbitrarious Essence is a Being without a Nature, a Contradiction, and therefore a Non-Entity. Wherefore the Natures of Justice and Injustice cannot be Arbitrarious Things, that may be Applicable by Will indifferently to any Actions or Dispositions whatsoever. For the Modes of all Subsistent Beings, and the Relations of things to one another, are immutably and necessarily what they are, and not Arbitrary, being not by will but by Nature.

816 3. Now the necessary Consequence of that which we have hitherto said is this, That it is so far from being true, that all Moral Good and Evil, Just and Unjust are meer Arbitrary and Factitious things, that are created wholly by Will; that (if we would speak properly) we must needs say that nothing is Morally Good or Evil, Just or Unjust by meer Will without Nature, because every thing is what it is by Nature, and not by Will. For though it will be objected here, that when God, or Civil Powers Command a Thing to be done, that was not before¹ obligatory or unlawful, the thing Willed or Commanded doth forthwith become² Obligatory, that which ought to be done by Creatures and Subjects respectively; in which the Nature of Moral Good or Evil is commonly Conceived to consist. And therefore if all Good and Evil, Just and Unjust be not the Creatures of meer Will (as many assert) yet at least Positive things must needs owe all their Morality, their Good and Evil to meer Will without Nature: Yet notwithstanding, if we well Consider it, we shall find that even in Positive Commands themselves, meer Will doth not make the thing commanded Just or Obligatory, or beget and create any Obligation to Obedience; but that it is Natural Justice or Equity, which gives to one the Right or Authority of Commanding, and begets in another Duty and Obligation to Obedience. Therefore it is observable, that Laws and Commands do not run thus, to Will that this or that thing shall become Just or Unjust, Obligatory or Unlawful; or that Men shall be obliged or bound to obey; but only to require that something be done or not done, or otherwise to menace Punishment to the Transgressors thereof. For it was never heard of, that any one founded all his Authority of Commanding others, and others Obligation or Duty to Obey his Commands, in a Law of his own

¹ *Debitum* or *illicitum*.

² *Δέον* or *debitum*.

making, that men should be Required, Obliged, or Bound to Obey him. Wherefore since the thing willed in all Laws is not that men should be Bound or Obliged to Obey ; this thing cannot be the product of the meer Will of the Commander, but it must proceed from something else; namely, the Right or Authority of the Commander, which is founded in natural Justice and Equity, and an antecedent Obligation to Obedience in the Subjects; which things are not Made by Laws, but pre-supposed before all Laws to make them valid : And if it should be imagined, that any one should make a positive Law to require that others should be Obliged, or Bound to Obey him, every one would think such a Law ridiculous and absurd ; for if they were Obliged before, then this Law would be in vain, and to no Purpose ; and if they were not before Obliged, then they could not be Obliged by any Positive Law, because they were not previously Bound to Obey such a Person's Commands : So that Obligation to Obey all Positive Laws is Older than all Laws, and Previous or Antecedent to them. Neither is it a thing that is arbitrarily Made by Will, or can be the Object of Command, but that which either Is or Is not by Nature. And if this were not Morally Good and Just in its own Nature before any Positive Command of God, That God should be Obeyed by his Creatures, the bare Will of God himself could not beget an Obligation upon any to Do what he Willed and Commanded, because the Natures of things do not depend upon Will, being not things that are arbitrarily Made, but things that Are. To conclude therefore, even in Positive Laws and Commands it is not meer Will that Obligeth, but the Natures of Good and Evil, Just and Unjust, really existing in the World.

- 817 4. Wherefore that common Distinction betwixt things, things naturally and positively Good and Evil, or (as others express it) betwixt Things that are therefore commanded because they are Good and Just, and Things that are therefore Good and Just, because they are Commanded, stands in need of a right Explication, that we be not led into a mistake thereby, as if the Obligation to do those Thetical and Positive things did arise wholly from Will without Nature: Whereas it is not the meer Will and Pleasure of him that commandeth, that obligeth to do Positive things commanded, but the Intellectual Nature of him that is commanded. Wherefore the Difference of these things lies wholly in this, That there are

some things which the Intellectual Nature obligeth to of it self, and directly, absolutely and perpetually, and these things are called naturally Good and Evil; other things there are which the same Intellectual Nature Obligeth to by Accident only, and hypothetically, upon Condition of some voluntary Action either of our own or some other Persons, by means whereof those things which were in their own Nature indifferent, falling under something that is absolutely Good or Evil, and thereby acquiring a new Relation to the Intellectual Nature, do for the time become such Things as Ought to be Done or Omitted, being Made such not by Will but by Nature. As for Example, To keep Faith and perform Covenants, is that which natural Justice obligeth to absolutely; therefore upon the Supposition that any one maketh a Promise, which is a voluntary Act of his own, to do something which he was not before Obliged to by natural Justice, upon the intervention of this voluntary Act of his own, that indifferent thing promised falling now under something absolutely Good, and becoming the Matter of Promise and Covenant, standeth for the present in a new Relation to the Rational Nature of the Promiser, and becometh for the time a thing which Ought to be done by him, or which he is obliged to do. Not as if the meer Will or Words and Breath of him that covenanteth had any power to change the Moral Natures of things, or any Ethical Virtue of Obliging; but because Natural Justice and Equity obligeth to keep Faith and perform Covenants. In like manner Natural Justice, that is, the Rational or Intellectual Nature, obligeth not only to Obey God, but also Civil Powers, that have lawful Authority of Commanding, and to observe Political order amongst men; and therefore if God or Civil Powers command any thing to be done that is not unlawful in it self; upon the intervention of this voluntary Act of theirs, those things that were before Indifferent, become by accident for the time Obligatory, such things as Ought to be done by us, not for their own sakes, but for the sake of that which Natural Justice absolutely obligeth to.

818 And these are the things that are commonly called Positively Good and Evil, Just or Unjust, such as though they are adiaphorous or Indifferent in themselves, yet Natural Justice obligeth to accidentally, on Supposition of the voluntary Action of some other Person rightly qualified in Commanding, whereby they fall into something Absolutely Good. Which things are not made Good

or Due by the meer Will or Pleasure of the Commander, but by that Natural Justice which gives him Right and Authority of Commanding, and Obligeth others to Obey him ; without which Natural Justice, neither Covenants nor Commands could possibly oblige any one. For the Will of another doth no more oblige in Commands, than our own Will in Promises and Covenants. To conclude therefore, Things called Naturally Good and Due are such things as the Intellectual Nature Obliges to immediately, absolutely and perpetually, and upon no Condition of any voluntary Action that may be Done or Omitted intervening ; but those things that are called Positively Good and Due, are such as Natural Justice or the Intellectual Nature Obligeth to accidentally and hypothetically, upon Condition of some voluntary Act of another Person invested with lawful Authority in Commanding.

819 And that it is not the meer Will of the Commander, that makes these Positive things to Oblige or become Due, but the Nature of things ; appears evidently from hence, because it is not the volition of every one that Obligeth, but of a Person rightly qualified and invested with lawful Authority ; and because the liberty of commanding is circumscribed within certain Bounds and Limits, so that if any Commander go beyond the Sphere and Bounds that Nature sets him, which are indifferent things, his Commands will not at all oblige.

820 5. But if we would speak yet more accurately and precisely, we might rather say, That no Positive Commands whatsoever do make any thing morally Good and Evil, Just and Unjust, which Nature had not made such before. For Indifferent things Commanded, Considered Materially in themselves, remain still what they were before in their own Nature, that is, Indifferent, because (as Aristotle speaks) Will cannot change Nature. And those things that are by Nature Indifferent, must needs be as immutably so, as those things that are by Nature Just or Unjust, honest or shameful. But all the Moral Goodness, Justice and Virtue that is exercised in Obeying Positive Commands, and doing such things as are positive only and to be done for no other Cause but because they are Commanded, or in respect to Political Order, consisteth not in the Materiality of the Actions themselves, but in that Formality of yielding Obedience to the Commands of Lawful Authority in them. Just as when a man Covenanteth or Promiseth to do an Indifferent

thing which by Natural Justice he was not bound to do, the Virtue of doing it consisteth not in the Materiality of the Action promised, but in the Formality of Keeping Faith and Performing Covenants. Wherefore in Positive Commands, the Will of the Commander doth not create any New Moral Entity, but only diversly Modifies and Determines that general Duty or Obligation of Natural Justice to Obey Lawful Authority and Keep Oaths and Covenants, as our own Will in Promising doth but produce several Modifications of keeping Faith. And therefore there are no New things Just or due made by either of them, besides what was alway by nature Such, to Keep our own Promises, and Obey the Lawful Commands of others.

821 6. We see then that it is so far from being true, that all Moral Good and Evil, Just and Unjust (if they be any thing) are made by meer Will and Arbitrary Commands (as many conceive) that it is not possible that any Command of God or Man should Oblige otherwise than by Virtue of that which is Naturally Just. And tho' Particular Promises and Commands be made by Will, yet it is not Will but Nature that obligeth to the doing of things Promised and Commanded, or makes them such things as ought to be done. For meer Will cannot change the Moral Nature of Actions, nor the Nature of Intellectual Beings. And therefore if there were no Natural Justice, that is, if the Rational or Intellectual Nature in its self were indetermined and Unobliged to any thing, and so destitute of all Morality, it were not possible that any thing should be made Morally Good or Evil, obligatory or unlawful, or that any Moral Obligation should be begotten by any Will or Command whatsoever.

CHAPTER III.

822 1. BUT some there are that will still Contend, that though it should be granted that Moral Good and Evil, Just and Unjust do not depend upon any Created Will, yet notwithstanding they must needs depend upon the Arbitrary Will of God, because the Natures and Essences of all things, and consequently all Verities and Falsities, depend upon the same. For if the Natures and Essences of things should not depend upon the Will of God, it would follow from hence, that something that was not God was independent upon God.

2. And this is plainly asserted by that ingenious Philosopher

Renatus Des Cartes, who in his Answer to the Sixth Objector against his Metaphysical Meditations, writes thus : It is a Contradiction to say, that the Will of God was not from Eternity Indifferent to all things which are or ever shall be done ; because no Good or Evil, nothing to be Believed or Done or Omitted, can be fixed upon, the Idea whereof was in the Divine Intellect before that his Will Determined it self to Effect that such a thing should be. Neither do I speak this concerning Priority of Time, but even there was nothing Prior in Order or by Nature, or Reason as they call it, so as that that Idea of Good inclined God to chuse one thing rather than another. As for Example sake, he would therefore create the World in Time, because that he saw that it would be better so than if he had created it from Eternity ; neither willed he that the three Angles of a Triangle should be Equal to two Right Angles, because he knew that it could not be otherwise. But on the contrary, because he would create the World in Time, therefore it is better than if he had created it from Eternity ; and because he would that the three Angles of a Triangle should necessarily be equal to two Right Angles, therefore this is true and can be no otherwise ; and so of other things. And thus the Greatest Indifference in God is the Greatest Argument of his Omnipotence.

823 And again afterward, To him that Considers the Immensity of God it is Manifest, That there can be nothing at all which doth not depend upon him, not only nothing Subsisting, but also no Order, no Law, no Reason of Truth and Goodness.

And when he was again urged by the Sixth Objector, Could not God cause that the Nature of a Triangle should not be such ? and how, I pray thee, could he from Eternity cause that it should not be true, That twice four are eight ? He confesseth ingenuously that those things were not intelligible to us ; but yet notwithstanding they must be so, because Nothing in any Sort of Being can be, which doth not depend upon God. Which Doctrine of Cartesius is greedily swallowed down by some Servile Followers of his that have lately written of the Old Philosophy.

824 3. Perhaps some may make a Question for all this, whether Cartesius were any more in earnest in this, than when he elsewhere goes about to defend the Doctrine of Transubstantiation by the Principles of his new Philosophy, because in his Meditations upon the old Philosophy (where it is probable he would set down the

genuine Sense of his own Mind more undisguisedly, before he was assaulted by these Objectors, and thereby forced to turn himself into several Shapes) he affirmeth that the Essences of things were eternal and immutable; but being afterward urged by Gassendus with this Inconvenience, that then something would be eternal and immutable besides God, and so independent upon God, he doth in a manner unsay it again, and betakes himself to this pitiful Evasion, As the Poets feign that the Fates were indeed fixed by Jupiter, but that when they were fixed, he had obliged himself to the preserving of them; so I do not think that the Essences of things, and those mathematical Truths which can be known of them, are independent on God; but I think nevertheless that because God so willed, and so ordered, therefore they are immutable and eternal; which is plainly to make them in their own Nature mutable. But whether Cartesius were in jest or earnest in this Business, it matters not, for his bare Authority ought to be no more valued by us than the Authority of Aristotle and other antient Philosophers was by him, whom he so freely dissents from.

825 4. For though the Names of things may be changed by any one at pleasure, as that a Square may be called a Circle, or a Cube a Sphere; yet that the Nature of a Square should not be necessarily what it is, but be arbitrarily convertible into the Nature of a Circle, and so the Essence of a Circle into the Essence of a Sphere, or that the self-same Body, which is perfectly cubical, without any physical Alteration made in it, should by this metaphysical Way of Transformation of Essences, by meer Will and Command be made spherical or cylindrical; this doth most plainly imply a Contradiction, and the Compossibility of Contradictions destroys all Knowledge and the definite Natures or Notions of things. Nay, that which implies a Contradiction is a Non-Entity, and therefore cannot be the Object of Divine Power. And the Reason is the same for all other things, as just and unjust; for every thing is what it is immutably by the Necessity of its own Nature; neither is it any Derogation at all from the Power of God to say, that he cannot make a thing to be that which it is not. Then there might be no such thing as Knowledge in God himself. God might will that there should be no such thing as Knowledge.

826 5. And as to the Being or not Being of Particular Essences, as that God might, if he pleased, have Willed that there should be no

such thing as a Triangle or Circle, and therefore nothing Demonstrable or Knowable of either of them; which is likewise asserted by Cartesius, and those that make the Essences of things dependent upon an Arbitrary Will in God: This is all one as if one should say, that God could have Willed, if he had pleased, that neither his own Power nor Knowledge should be Infinite.

827 6. Now it is certain, that if the Natures and Essences of all things, as to their being such or such, do depend upon a Will of God that is essentially Arbitrary, there can be no such thing as Science or Demonstration, nor the Truth of any Mathematical or Metaphysical Proposition be known any otherwise, than by some Revelation of the Will of God concerning it, and by a certain Enthusiastick or Fanatick Faith and Perswasion thereupon, that God would have such a thing to be true or false at such a time, or for so long. And so nothing would be true or false Naturally but Positively only, all Truth and Science being meer Arbitrarious things. Truth and Falshood woud be only Names. Neither would there be any more Certainty in the Knowledge of God himself, since it must wholly depend upon the Mutability of a Will in him Essentially Indifferent and Undetermin'd; and if we would speak properly according to this Hypothesis, God himself would not Know or be Wise by Knowledge or by Wisdom, but by Will.

828 7. Wherefore as for that Argument, That unless the Essences of things and all Verities and Falsities depend upon the arbitrary Will of God, there would be something that was not God, independent upon God; if it be well consider'd, it will prove a meer Bugbear, and nothing so terrible and formidable as Cartesius seemed to think it. For there is no other genuine Consequence deducible from this Assertion, That the Essences and Verities of things are independent upon the Will of God, but that there is an eternal and immutable Wisdom in the Mind of God, and thence participated by Created Beings independent upon the Will of God. Now the Wisdom of God is as much God as the Will of God; and whether of these two things in God, that is, Will or Wisdom, should depend upon the other, will be best determined from the several Natures of them. For Wisdom in it self hath the Nature of a Rule and Measure, it being a most Determinate and Inflexible thing: but Will being not only a Blind and Dark thing, as consider'd in it self, but also Indefinite and Indeterminate, hath therefore the Nature of

a thing Regulable and Measurable. Wherefore it is the Perfection of Will, as such, to be guided and determined by Wisdom and Truth; but to make Wisdom, Knowledge and Truth, to be Arbitrarily determined by Will, and to be regulated by such a Plumbean and Flexible Rule as that is, is quite to destroy the Nature of it; for Science or Knowledge is the Comprehension of that which necessarily is, and there can be nothing more contradictory than Truth and Falshood Arbitrary. Now all the Knowledge and Wisdom that is in Creatures, whether Angels or Men, is nothing else but a Participation of that one Eternal, Immutable and Increased Wisdom of God, or several Signatures of that one Archetypal Seal, or like so many multiplied Reflections of one and the same Face, made in several Glasses, whereof some are clearer, some obscurer, some standing nearer, some further off.

829 8. Moreover, it was the Opinion of the Wisest of the Philosophers, (as we shall shew afterward) That there is also in the Scale of Being a Nature of Goodness Superior to Wisdom, which therefore measures and determines the Wisdom of God, as his Wisdom measures and determines his Will, and which the antient Cabalists were wont to call כתר, a Crown, as being the Top or Crown of the Deity, of which more afterward. Wherefore altho' some Novelists make a contracted Idea of God, consisting of Nothing else but Will and Power; yet his Nature is better expressed by some in this Mystical or Enigmatical Representation of an infinite Circle, whose inmost Center is Simple Goodness, the Rays and expanded Plat thereof, all Comprehending and Immutable Wisdom, the Exterior Periphery or Interminate Circumference, Omnipotent Will or Activity, by which every thing Without God is brought forth into Existence. Wherefore the Will and Power of God have no Command Inwardly¹ either upon the Wisdom and Knowledge of God, or upon the ethical and Moral Disposition of his Nature, which is his Essential Goodness; but the Sphere of its Activity is ²without God, where it hath an Absolute Command upon the Existences of things; and is always Free, tho' not always indifferent, since it is its greatest Perfection to be determined by Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Goodness. But this is to anticipate what according to the Laws of Method should follow afterward in another Place.

¹ Imperium ad intra.

² Extra Deum.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

830 Now the Demonstrative Strength of our Cause lying plainly in this, That it is not possible that any thing should Be without a Nature, and the Natures or Essences of all things being Immutable, therefore upon Supposition that there is any thing Really Just or Unjust,¹ Due or unlawful, there must of necessity be something so both Naturally and Immutably, which no Law, Decree, Will, nor Custom can alter. There have not wanted some among the Old Philosophers, that rather than they would acknowledge any thing Immutably Just or Unjust, would not stick to shake the very Foundations of all things, and to deny that there was any Immutable Nature or Essence of any thing, and by Consequence any absolute Certainty of Truth or Knowledge ; maintaining this strange Paradox, that Both all Being and Knowledge was Phantastical and Relative only, and therefore that Nothing was Good or Evil, Just or Unjust, True or False, White or Black, absolutely and Immutably, but Relatively to every Private Person's Humour or Opinion.

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BOOK IV.

CHAPTER VI.

831 WE have now abundantly confuted the Protagorean Philosophy, which, that it might be sure to destroy the Immutable Natures of Just and Unjust, would destroy all Science or Knowledge, and make it Relative and Phantastical. Having shewed that this Tenet is not only most absurd and contradictious in it self, but also manifestly repugnant to that very Atomical Physiology, on which Protagoras endeavoured to found it, and, than which nothing can more effectually confute and destroy it : and, also largely demonstrated, that though Sense be indeed a mere Relative and Phantastical Perception, as Protagoras thus far rightly supposed ; yet notwithstanding there is a Superior Power of Intellection and Knowledge of a different Nature from Sense, which is not terminated in meer Seeming and Appearance only, but in the Truth and Reality of things, and reaches to the Comprehension of that which

Really and Absolutely is, whose Objects are the Eternal and Immutable Essences and Natures of Things, and their Unchangeable Relations to one another.

832 2. To prevent all Mistake, I shall again remember, what I have before intimated, that where it is affirmed that the Essences of all Things are Eternal and Immutable; which Doctrine the Theological Schools have constantly avouched, this is only to be understood of the Intelligible Essences and *Rationes* of Things, as they are the Objects of the Mind: And that there neither is nor can be any other Meaning of it, than this, that there is an Eternal Knowledge and Wisdom, or an Eternal Mind or Intellect, which comprehends within it self the Steady and Immutable *Rationes* of all Things and their Verities, from which all Particular Intellects are derived, and on which they do depend. But not that the Constitutive Essences of all Individual Created Things were Eternal and Uncreated, as if God in Creating of the World, did nothing else, but as some sarcastically express it, *Sartoris instar Rerum Essentias vestire Existentia*, only cloathed the Eternal, Increased, and Antecedent Essences of Things with a New outside Garment of Existence, and not created the whole of them: And as if the Constitutive Essences of Things could Exist apart separately from the Things themselves, which absurd Conceit Aristotle frequently, and no less deservedly chastises.

833 3. Wherefore the Result of all that we have hitherto said is this, that the Intelligible Natures and Essences of Things are neither Arbitrary nor Phantastical, that is, neither Alterable by any Will whatsoever, nor changeable by Opinion; and therefore every Thing is Necessarily and Immutably to Science and Knowledge what it is, whether Absolutely, or Relatively, to all Minds and Intellects in the World. So that if Moral Good and Evil, Just and Unjust, signify any Reality, either Absolute or Relative, in the Things so denominated, as they must have some certain Natures, which are the Actions or Souls of Men, they are neither Alterable by meer Will nor Opinion.

834 Upon which Ground that wise Philosopher Plato, in his *Minos*, determines that Νέμος, a Law, is not δόγμα πόλεως, any Arbitrary Decree of a City or supreme Governours; because there may be Unjust Decrees, which therefore are no Laws, but the Invention of that which IS, or what is Absolutely or Immutably Just, in its

own Nature. Though it be very true also, that the Arbitrary Constitutions of those that have Lawful Authority of Commanding, when they are not materially Unjust, are Laws also in a secondary Sense, by virtue of that Natural and Immutable Justice or Law that requires Political Order to be Observed.

835 4. But I have not taken all this Pains only to Confute Scepticism or Phantasticism, or meerly to defend and corroborate our Argument for the Immutable Natures of Just and Unjust; but also for some other Weighty Purposes that are very much conduced to the Business that we have in hand. And first of all, that the Soul is not a meer *Rasa Tabula*, a Naked and Passive Thing, which has no innate Furniture or Activity of its own, nor any thing at all in it, but what was impressed upon it without; for if it were so, then there could not possibly be any such Thing as Moral Good and Evil, Just and Unjust; Forasmuch as these Differences do not arise meerly from the outward Objects, or from the Impresses which they make upon us by Sense, there being no such Thing in them; in which Sense it is truly affirmed by the Author of the *Leviathan*. That there is no common Rule of Good and Evil to be taken from the Nature of the Objects themselves, that is, either considered absolutely in themselves, or Relatively to external Sense only, but according to some other interior Analogy which Things have to a certain inward Determination in the Soul it self, from whence the Foundation of all this Difference must needs arise, as I shall shew afterwards; Not that the Anticipations of Morality spring meerly from intellectual Forms and notional Ideas of the Mind, or from certain Rules or Propositions, arbitrarily printed upon the Soul as upon a Book, but from some other more inward, and vital Principle, in intellectual Beings, as such, whereby they have a natural Determination in them to do some Things, and to avoid others, which could not be, if they were meer naked Passive Things. Wherefore since the Nature of Morality cannot be understood, without some Knowledge of the Nature of the Soul, I thought it seasonable and requisite here to take this Occasion offered, and to prepare the Way to our following Discourse, by shewing in general, that the Soul is not a meer Passive and Receptive Thing, which hath no innate active Principle of its own, Because upon this Hypothesis there could be no such Thing as Morality.

836 5. Again, I have the rather insisted upon this Argument also, because that which makes Men so inclinable to think that Justice, Honesty and Morality are but thin, airy and phantastical Things, that have little or no Entity or Reality in them besides Sensuality, is a certain Opinion in Philosophy which doth usually accompany it, that Matter and Body are the first Original and Source of all Things; that there is no Incorporeal Substance superiour to Matter and independent upon it: And therefore that sensible Things are the only real and substantial Things in Nature; but Souls and Minds springing secondarily out of Body, that Intellectuality and Morality which belong unto them, are but thin and evanid Shadows of sensible and corporeal Things, and not natural, but artificial and factitious Things that do as it were border upon the Confines of Non-Entity.

837 6. This is a Thing excellently well observed by Plato, and therefore I shall set down his Words at large concerning it. ‘These Men making this Distribution of Things, that all Things that are, are either by Nature, or Art, or Chance, they imagine that the greatest and most excellent Things that are in the World, are to be attributed to Nature and Chance; which working upon those greater Things which are made by Nature, does form and fabricate certain smaller Things afterward, which we commonly call artificial Things. To speak more plainly, Fire, Water, Air, and Earth, they attribute wholly to Nature and Chance, but not to any Art or Wisdom; in like manner those Bodies of the Earth, the Sun, Moon and Stars, they will have to be made out of them fortuitously agitated; and so by Chance causing both divers Systems and Compages of Things: thus they would have the whole Heavens made, and all the Earth and Animals, and all the Seasons of the Year, not by any Mind Intellect, or God, not by any Art or Wisdom, but all by blind Nature and Chance. But Art and Mind afterwards springing up out of these, to have begotten certain ludicrous Things, which have little Truth and Reality in them, but are like Images in a Glass, such as Picture and Musick produces. Wherefore these Men attribute all Ethicks, Politicks, Morality and Laws, not to Nature, but to Art, whose Productions are not real and substantial.’

838 7. Now this Philosopher, that he may evince that Ethicks, Politicks and Morality are as real and substantial Things, and as

truly natural as those Things which belong to Matter, he endeavours to shew that Souls and Minds do not spring secondarily out of Matter and Body, but that they are real Things in Nature, superior and antecedent to Body and Matter. His Words are these: ‘These Men are all ignorant concerning the Nature of Mind and Soul, as in other Regards, so especially in respect of its Original, as it is in order of Nature before Matter and Body, and does not result out of it; but does command it, govern it, and rule it.’

And I have in like manner in this antecedent Discourse, endeavoured to shew that Wisdom, Knowledge, Mind and Intellect, are no thin Shadows or Images of corporeal and sensible Things, nor do result secondarily out of Matter and Body, and from the Activity and Impressions thereof; but have an independent and self-subsistent Being, which in order of Nature, is before Body; all particular created Minds being but derivative Participations of one Infinite Eternal Mind, which is antecedent to all corporeal Things.

839 8. Now from hence it naturally follows, that those Things which belong to Mind and Intellect, such as Morality, Ethicks, Politicks and Laws are, which Plato calls, The Offspring and Productions of Mind, are no less to be accounted natural Things, or real and substantial, than those things which belong to stupid and senseless Matter: For since Mind and Intellect are first in order of Nature before Matter and Body, those Things which belong to the Mind must needs be in order of Nature before those Things which belong to the Body. ‘Wherefore Mind and Intellect, Art and Law, Ethicks and Morality are first in order of Nature, before Hard and Soft, Light and Heavy, Long and Broad, which belong to Body;’ and therefore more real and substantial Things. For since Mind and Intellect are a higher, more real and substantial Thing than senseless Body and Matter, and what hath far the more Vigour, Activity and Entity in it, Modifications of Mind and Intellect, such as Justice and Morality, must of Necessity be more real and substantial Things, than the Modifications of mere senseless Matter, such as Hard and Soft, Thick and Thin, Hot and Cold, and the like are. And therefore that grave Philosopher excellently well concludes, that ‘the greatest and first Works and Actions are of Art or of Mind, which were before Body; but those

Things which are said to be by Nature (in which they abuse the Word Nature, appropriating it only to senseless and inanimate Matter) are afterwards, being governed by Mind and Art.'

- 840** 9. Wherefore I thought our former Discourse seasonable to confute the Dulness and Grossness of those Philosophasters that make corporeal Things existing without the Soul, to be the only solid and substantial Things, and make their grossest external Senses the only Judges of Reality of Things, 'and so conclude nothing is or has any Reality but what they can grasp in their Hands, or have some gross or palpable Sense of.'

Whereas notwithstanding it is most true that those corporeal Qualities, which they think to be such Real Things existing in Bodies without them, are for the most part fantastick and imaginary Things, and have no more Reality than the Colours of the Rainbow ; and, as Plotinus expresteth it, 'have no Reality at all in the Objects without us, but only a seeming Kind of Entity in our own Fancies ;' and therefore are not absolutely any Thing in themselves, but only relative to Animals. So that they do in a manner mock us, when we conceive of them as Things really existing without us, being nothing but our own Shadows, and the vital passive Energies of our own Souls.

- 841** Though it was not the Intention of God or Nature to abuse us herein, but a most wise Contrivance thus to beautify and adorn the visible and material World, to add Lustre or Imbellishment to it, that it might have Charms, Relishes and Allurements in it, to gratify our Appetites ; Whereas otherwise really in it self, the whole corporeal World in its naked Hue, is nothing else but a Heap of Dust or Atoms, of several Figures and Magnitudes, variously agitated up and down ; so that these Things, which we look upon as such real Things without us, are not properly the Modifications of Bodies themselves, but several Modifications, Passions and Affections of our own Souls.

- 842** 10. Neither are these passive and sympathetical Energies of the Soul, when it acts confusedly with the Body and the Pleasures resulting from them, such real and substantial things as those that arise from the pure noetical Energies of the Soul it self Intellectually and Morally ; for since the Mind and Intellect is in it self a more real and substantial Thing, and fuller of Entity than Matter and Body, those Things which are the pure Offspring

of the Mind, and sprout from the Soul it self, must needs be more real and substantial than those Things which blossom from the Body, or from the Soul infeebled by it, and slumbering in it.

843 11. Wherefore that Philosopher professing and understanding to confute Atheists, and to shew, That all Atheists, though they pretend to Wit never so much, are but Bunglers at Reason, and sorry Philosophers, He, not without Cause, fetches his Discourse from hence, that ‘ They that thus infect Men’s Minds with Impiety and Atheism, make that which is the first Cause of all Generation and Corruption, to be the last Thing in the Universe, and that which is the last to be the first : From hence proceeds their Errour concerning the Being of God ;’ that is, they make Mind and Soul to be the last Thing, and Body and Matter to be the first.

844 This therefore is the only Course and Method which this Philosopher proceeds in to confute the Atheists ; to shew, ‘ That Mind and Soul, in the Order of the Universe, are before Body, and not posterior to it ; Mind and Soul being that which rules in the Universe, and Body that which is ruled and ordered by it.’ And there is no Phenomenon in the World but may be salved from this Hypothesis.

Now this he demonstrates, even from local Motion, because Body and Matter has no self-moving Power, and therefore it is moved and determined in its Motion by a higher Principle, a Soul or Mind ; which Argument is further improved by the Author of that excellent philosophical Treatise, Book II. Chap. 11.

845 12. Now, for the self-same Cause, I have endeavoured to demonstrate in the foregoing Discourse, that Knowledge and Intellection cannot possibly spring from Sense, nor the Radiation or Impresses of Matter and Body upon that which knows, but from an active Power of the Mind, as a Thing antecedent to Matter, and independent upon it, whereby it is enabled from within it self to exert intelligible Ideas of all Things.

846 13. Lastly, I have insisted the rather so largely upon this Argument, for this further Reason also, because it is not possible that there should be any such Thing as Morality, unless there be a God, that is, an Infinite Eternal Mind that is the first Original and Source of all Things, whose Nature is the first Rule and Exemplar of Morality ; for otherwise it is not conceivable, whence any such Thing should be derived to particular Intellectual Beings. Now

there can be no such Thing as God, if stupid and senseless Matter be the first Original of all Things ; and if all Being and Perfection that is found in the World, may spring up and arise out of the dark Womb of unthinking Matter ; but if Knowledge and Understanding, if Soul, Mind and Wisdom may result and emerge out of it, then doubtless every thing that appears in the World may ; and so Night, Matter, and Chaos, must needs be the first and only Original of all Things.

- 847** 14. Wherefore Plato, as I have already intimated, taking Notice of the Opinion of divers Pretenders to Philosophy, ‘ That Fire, Water, Air and Earth, are the first Beings of all, to which senseless and inanimate Things they appropriate the Title of Nature : But that Soul did spring up afterward out of these as a secondary Thing,’ and as a meer Shadow of them, he immediately adds concerning it, ‘ We have here found and discovered the true Fountain of all that atheistical Madness that possesses most of those that deal in Physiology or Questions of Natural Philosophy,’ viz. That they are all possessed with this Sottishness, that Matter and Body is the first Original of all Things ; and therefore it is observed by the same Author, that the same Persons that held all Things were derived from Body, Blind Nature and Chance, did both deny the Existence of God, and which is consentaneous thereunto, asserted, that Justice and Morality have no Nature or Entity at all, saying, they were nothing but Passion from Corporeal Things, without the Sentient or the Renitence, or the Reaction made upon local Motion in a Body duly mixed and tempered : that is, if Soul and Mind, Knowledge and Wisdom may thus arise from the Contemplation of meer senseless Matter, and Radiation or Impression that is the meer local Motion of corporeal Objects without, then, as we said before, there cannot possibly be the least Shadow of Argument left to prove a Deity by ; since not only the souls of Men, but also all that Wisdom, Counsel and Contrivance that appears in the Frame of the whole visible World, might first arise in like manner from the meer casual Concourse and Contemperation of the whole Matter ; either in those particular Bodies of the Sun and Stars, or else in the whole System and Compages of the material World it self.

- 848** 15. Wherefore we have not only shewed that all Intellection and Knowledge does not emerge or emanate out of Sense, but also that

Sense it self is not a meer Passion or Reception of corporeal Impresses without, but that it is an active Energy and Vigour, though sympathetical in the Sentient. And it is no more possible that this should arise out of senseless Matter and Atoms, by reason of any peculiar Contemperation or Contexture of them in respect of Figure, Site, and Motion, than that which all Atheists stoutly deny, that something should arise out of nothing.

And here we can never sufficiently applaud that antient atomical Philosophy, so successfully revived of late by *Cartesius*, in that it shews distinctly what Matter is, and what it can amount unto, namely, nothing else but what may be produced from meer Magnitude, Figure, Site, local Motion, and Rest ; from whence it is demonstrably evident and mathematically certain, that no Cogitation can possibly arise out of the Power of Matter ; whereas that other Philosophy which brings in a dark unintelligible Matter that is nothing and every thing, out of whose Potentiality not only innumerable Qualities, but also substantial Forms and sensitive Souls, (and therefore why not rational also, since all reason emerges out of Sense) may be educed, must of necessity perpetually brood and hatch Atheism. Whereas we cannot but extremely admire that monstrous Dotage and Sottishness of *Epicurus*, and some other spurious Pretenders to this Atomical Philosophy, that notwithstanding they acknowledge nothing else in Matter besides Magnitude, Figure, Site, and Motion, yet would make not only the Power of Sensation, but also of Intellection and Ratioecination, and therefore all human Souls, to arise from the mere Contexture of corporeal Atoms, and utterly explode all incorporeal Substances : than which two Assertions nothing can be more contradictious. And this is far more absurd, to make Reason and Intellection to arise from Magnitude, Figure and Motion, than to attribute those unintelligible Qualities to Matter which they explode.

JOHN GAY

Concerning the Fundamental Principle of Virtue or Morality

[Rev. John Gay, Fellow of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.
Dissertations prefixed to the first edition of Edmund Law's translation of
Archbishop King's *Essay on the Origin of Evil*, 1731. Reprinted here
from the fifth edition of that work, 1781.]

849 THOUGH all writers of morality have in the main agreed what particular actions are virtuous and what otherwise, yet they have, or at least seem to have differed very much, both concerning the Criterion of Virtue, viz. what it is which denominates any action virtuous ; or, to speak more properly, what it is by which we must try any action to know whether it be virtuous or no ; and also concerning the Principle, or motive, by which men are induced to pursue Virtue.

As to the former, some have placed it in acting agreeably to nature, or reason ; others in the fitness of things ; others in a conformity with truth ; others in promoting the common good ; others in the will of God, &c. This disagreement of moralists concerning the rule or Criterion of Virtue in general, and at the same time their almost perfect agreement concerning the particular branches of it, would be apt to make one suspect, either that they had a different Criterion (though they did not know or attend to it) from what they professed ; or (which perhaps is the true as well as the more favourable opinion) that they only talk a different language, and that all of them have the same Criterion in reality, only they have expressed it in different words.

850 And there will appear the more room for this conjecture, if we consider the ideas themselves about which morality is chiefly conversant, viz. that they are all mixed modes, or compound ideas,

arbitrarily put together, having at first no archetype or original existing, and afterwards no other than that which exists in other men's minds. Now since men, unless they have these their compound ideas, which are signified by the same name, made up precisely of the same simple ones, must necessarily talk a different language; and since this difference is so difficult, and in some cases impossible to be avoided, it follows that greater allowance and indulgence ought to be given to these writers than any other: and that (if we have a mind to understand them) we should not always take their words in the common acceptation, but in the sense in which we find that particular author which we are reading used them. And if a man interpret the writers of morality with this due candour, I believe their seeming inconsistencies and disagreements about the Criterion of Virtue, would in a great measure vanish; and he would find that acting agreeably to nature, or reason, (when rightly understood) would perfectly coincide with the fitness of things; the fitness of things (as far as these words have any meaning) with truth; truth with the common good; and the common good with the will of God.

But whether this difference be real, or only verbal, a man can scarce avoid observing from it, that mankind have the ideas of most particular Virtues, and also a confused notion of Virtue in general, before they have any notion of the Criterion of it; or ever did, neither perhaps can they, deduce all or any of those Virtues from their idea of Virtue in general, or upon any rational grounds shew how those actions (which the world call moral, and most, if not all men evidently have ideas of) are distinguished from other actions, or why they approve of those actions called moral ones, more than others.

851 However, since the idea of Virtue among all men (notwithstanding their difference in other respects) includes either tacitly or expressly, not only the idea of approbation as the consequence of it; but also that it is to every one, and in all circumstances, an object of choice; it is incumbent on all writers of morality, to shew that that in which they place Virtue, whatever it be, not only always will or ought to meet with approbation, but also that it is always an object of choice: which is the other great dispute among Moralists, viz. What is the Principle or Motive by which men are induced to pursue Virtue.

852 For some have imagined that that is the only object of choice to a rational creature, which upon the whole will produce more happiness than misery to the chooser ; and that men are, and ought to be guided wholly by this Principle ; and farther, that Virtue will produce more happiness than misery, and therefore is always an object of choice : and whatever is an object of choice, that we approve of.

But this, however true in Theory, is insufficient to account for matter of fact, i. e. that the generality of mankind do approve of Virtue, or rather virtuous actions, without being able to give any reason for their approbation ; and also, that some pursue it without knowing that it tends to their own private happiness ; nay even when it appears to be inconsistent with and destructive of their happiness.

853 And that this is a matter of fact, the ingenious Author of the *Enquiry into the Original of our Idea of Virtue* has so evidently made appear by a great variety of instances, that a man must be either very little acquainted with the World, or a mere Hobbist in his temper to deny it.

And therefore to solve these two difficulties, this excellent Author has supposed (without proving, unless by shewing the insufficiency of all other schemes) a moral sense to account for the former, and a public or benevolent affection for the latter : And these, viz. the moral sense and public affection, he supposes to be implanted in us like instincts, independent of reason, and previous to any instruction ; and therefore his opinion is, that no account can be given, or ought to be expected of them, any more than we pretend to account for the pleasure or pain which arises from sensation ; i.e. Why any particular motion produced in our bodies should be accompanied with pain rather than pleasure, and *vice versa*.

854 But this account seems still insufficient, rather cutting the knot than untying it ; and if it is not akin to the doctrine of innate ideas, yet I think it relishes too much of that of occult qualities. This ingenious author is certainly in the right in his observations upon the insufficiency of the common methods of accounting for both our election and approbation of moral actions, and rightly infers the necessity of supposing a moral sense (i. e. a power or faculty whereby we may perceive any action to be an object of approbation, and the agent of love) and public affections, to account for

the principal actions of human life. But then by calling these instincts, I think he stops too soon, imagining himself at the fountain-head, when he might have traced them much higher, even to the true principle of all our actions, our own happiness.

855 And this will appear by shewing that our approbation of morality, and all affections whatsoever, are finally resolved into reason pointing out private happiness, and are conversant only about things apprehended to be means tending to this end ; and that whenever this end is not perceived, they are to be accounted for from the association of ideas, and may properly enough be called habits.

For if this be clearly made out, the necessity of supposing a moral sense or public affections to be implanted in us, since it ariseth only from the insufficiency of all other schemes to account for human actions, will immediately vanish. But whether it be made out or no, we may observe in general, that all arguments *ad ignorantiam*, or that proceed *a remotione* only (as this, by which the moral sense and public affections are established to be instincts, evidently does) are scarce ever perfectly satisfactory, being for the most part subject to this doubt, viz. Whether there is a full enumeration of all the parts ; and liable also to this objection, viz. That though I cannot account for phenomena otherwise, yet possibly they may be otherwise accounted for.

But before we can determine this point, it will be necessary to settle all the terms : We shall in the first place therefore enquire what is meant by the Criterion of Virtue.

SECTION I.—CONCERNING THE CRITERION OF VIRTUE.

856 THE Criterion of any thing is a rule or measure by a conformity with which any thing is known to be of this or that sort, or of this or that degree. And in order to determine the criterion of any thing, we must first know the thing whose criterion we are seeking after. For a measure presupposes the idea of the thing to be measured. otherwise it could not be known, whether it was fit to measure it or no, (since what is the proper measure of one thing is not so of another). Liquids, cloth, and flesh, have all different measures : gold and silver different touchstones. This is very intelligible and the method of doing it generally clear, when either the quantity or kind of any particular substance is thus ascertained.

But when we extend our enquiries after a Criterion for abstract, mixed modes, which have no existence but in our minds, and are so very different in different men ; we are apt to be confounded, and search after a measure for we know not what. For unless we are first agreed concerning the thing to be measured, we shall in vain expect to agree in our criterion of it, or even to understand one another.

857 But it may be said, If we are exactly agreed in any mixed mode, what need of any criterion ? or what can we want farther ? What we want farther, and what we mean by the criterion of it, is this ; viz. to know whether any particular thing do belong to this mixed mode or no. And this is a very proper enquiry. For let a man learn the idea of intemperance from you never so clearly, and if you please let this be the idea, viz. the eating or drinking to that degree as to injure his understanding or health ; and let him also be never so much convinced of the obligation to avoid it ; yet it is a very pertinent question in him to ask you, How shall I know when I am guilty of intemperance ?

858 And if we examine this thoroughly, we shall find that every little difference in the definition of a mixed mode will require a different criterion, e. g. If murder is defined the wilful taking away the life of another, it is evident, that to enquire after the Criterion of Murder, is to enquire how we shall know when the life of another is taken away wilfully ; i. e. when one who takes away the life of another does it with that malicious design which is implied by wilfulness. But if murder be defined the guilty taking away the life of another, then to enquire after the criterion of murder, is to enquire how it shall be known when guilt is contracted in the wilful taking away the life of another. So that the criterion of murder, according to one or other of these definitions, will be different. For wilfulness perhaps will be made the criterion of guilt ; but wilfulness itself, if it want any, must have some farther criterion ; it being evident that nothing can be the measure of itself.

If the criterion is contained in the idea itself, then it is merely nominal, e. g. If virtue is defined, the acting agreeably to the will of God : to say the will of God is the criterion of virtue, is only to say, what is agreeable to the will of God is called Virtue. But the real criterion, which is of some use, is this, How shall I know what the Will of God is in this respect ?

859 From hence it is evident, that the criterion of a mixed mode is neither the definition of it, nor contained in it. For, as has been shewn, the general idea is necessarily to be fixed; and if the particulars comprehended under it are fixed or known also, there remains nothing to be measured; because we measure only things unknown. The general idea then being fixed, the criterion which is to measure or determine inferiors, must be found out and proved to be a proper rule or measure, by comparing it with the general idea only, independent of the inferior things to which it is to be applied. For the truth of the measure must be proved independently of the particulars to be measured, otherwise we shall prove in a circle.

860 To apply what has been said in general to the case in hand. Great enquiry is made after the criterion of virtue; but it is to be feared that few know distinctly what it is they are enquiring after; and therefore this must be clearly stated. And in order to this, we must (as has been shewn) first fix our idea of Virtue, and that exactly; and then our enquiry will be, how we shall know this or that less general or particular action to be comprehended under virtue. For unless our idea of virtue is fixed, we enquire after the criterion of we know not what. And this our idea of virtue, to give any satisfaction, ought to be so general, as to be conformable to that which all or most men are supposed to have. And this general idea, I think, may be thus expressed.

Virtue is the conformity to a rule of life, directing the actions of all rational creatures with respect to each other's happiness; to which conformity every one in all cases is obliged: and every one that does so conform, is or ought to be approved of, esteemed and loved for so doing. What is here expressed, I believe most men put into their idea of Virtue.

For Virtue generally does imply some relation to others: where self is only concerned, a man is called prudent, (not virtuous) and an action which relates immediately to God, is styled religious.

I think also that all men, whatever they make virtue to consist in, yet always make it to imply obligation and approbation.

861 The idea of Virtue being thus fixed, to enquire after the criterion of it, is to enquire what that rule of life is to which we are obliged to conform; or how that rule is to be found out which is to direct me in my behaviour towards others, which ought always to be

pursued, and which, if pursued, will or ought to procure me approbation, esteem, and love.

But before I can answer this enquiry: I must first see what is meant by Obligation.

SECTION II.—CONCERNING OBLIGATION.

862 Obligation is the necessity of doing or omitting any action in order to be happy: i. e. when there is such a relation between an Agent and an action that the Agent cannot be happy without doing or omitting that action, then the agent is said to be obliged to do or omit that action. So that obligation is evidently founded upon the prospect of happiness, and arises from that necessary influence which any action has upon present or future happiness or misery. And no greater obligation can be supposed to be laid upon any free agent without an express contradiction.

863 This obligation may be consider'd four ways, according to the four different manners in which it is induced: First, that obligation which ariseth from perceiving the natural consequences of things, i. e. the consequences of things acting according to the fix'd laws of nature, may be call'd natural. Secondly, that arising from merit or demerit, as producing the esteem and favour of our fellow creatures, or the contrary, is usually styled virtuous. Thirdly, that arising from the authority of the civil magistrate, civil. Fourthly, that from the authority of God, religious.

Now from the consideration of these four sorts of obligation (which are the only ones) it is evident that a full and complete obligation which will extend to all cases, can only be that arising from the authority of God; because God only can in all cases make a man happy or miserable: and therefore, since we are always obliged to that conformity called Virtue, it is evident that the immediate rule or criterion of it, is the will of God.

864 The next enquiry therefore is, what that Will of God in this particular is, or what it directs me to do?

Now it is evident from the nature of God, viz. his being infinitely happy in himself from all eternity, and from his goodness manifested in his works, that he could have no other design in creating mankind than their happiness; and therefore he wills their happiness; therefore the means of their happiness: therefore that my behaviour, as far as it may be a means of the happiness of mankind,

should be such. Here then we are got one step farther, or to a new criterion: not to a new criterion of virtue immediately, but to a criterion of the will of God. For it is an answer to the enquiry, How shall I know what the Will of God in this particular is? Thus the will of God is the immediate criterion of Virtue, and the happiness of mankind the criterion of the will of God; and therefore the happiness of mankind may be said to be the criterion of virtue, but once removed.

865 And since I am to do whatever lies in my power towards promoting the happiness of mankind, the next enquiry is, what is the criterion of happiness: i.e. How shall I know what in my power is, or is not, for the happiness of mankind?

Now this is to be known only from the relations of things, (which relations, with respect to our present enquiry some have called their fitness and unfitness.) For some things and actions are apt to produce pleasure, others pain; some are convenient, others inconvenient for a society: some are for the good of mankind; others tend to the detriment of it; therefore those are to be chosen which tend to the good of mankind, the others to be avoided.

Thus then we are got one step farther, viz. to the criterion of the happiness of Mankind. And from this criterion we deduce all particular virtues and vices.

866 The next enquiry is, How shall I know that there is this fitness and unfitness in things? or if there be, how shall I discover it in particular cases? And the answer is either from experience or reason. You either perceive the inconveniences of some things and actions when they happen: or you foresee them by contemplating the nature of the things and actions.

Thus the criterion of the fitness or unfitness of things may in general be said to be reason: which reason, when exactly conformable to the things existing, i.e. when it judges of things as they are, is called right reason. And hence also we sometimes talk of the reason of things, i.e. properly speaking, that relation which we should find out by our reason, if our reason was right.

The expressing by outward signs the relation of things as they really are, is called truth; and hence by the same kind of metaphor, we are apt to talk of the truth, as well as reason of things. Both expressions mean the same: which has often made me wonder why some men who cry up reason as the criterion of virtue, should yet dislike Mr Wollaston's notion of truth being its criterion.

867 The truth is, all these just mentioned, viz. the happiness of mankind; the relations, or fitness and unfitness of things; reason and truth; may in some sense be said to be criterions of virtue; but it must always be remembered that they are only remote criterions of it; being gradually subordinate to its immediate and proper criterion, the will of God.

And from hence we may perceive the reason of what I suggested in the beginning of this treatise, viz. That the dispute between moralists about the criterion of virtue is more in words than meaning; and that this difference between them has been occasioned by their dropping the immediate criterion, and choosing some a more remote, some a less remote one. And from hence we may see also the inconvenience of defining any mixed mode by its criterion. For that in a great measure has occasioned all this confusion; as may easily be made appear in all the pretended criterions of virtue above mentioned.

Thus those who either expressly exclude, or don't mention the will of God, making the immediate criterion of virtue to be the good of mankind; must either allow that virtue is not in all cases obligatory (contrary to the idea which all or most men have of it) or they must say that the good of mankind is a sufficient obligation. But how can the good of mankind be any obligation to me, when perhaps in particular cases, such as laying down my life, or the like, it is contrary to my happiness?

Those who drop the happiness of mankind, and talk of the relations, the fitness and unfitness of things, are still more remote from the true criterion. For fitness, without relation to some end, is scarce intelligible.

Reason and truth come pretty near the relations of things, because they manifestly presuppose them; but are still one step farther from the immediate criterion of virtue.

868 What has been said concerning the criterion of virtue as including our constant obligation to it, may perhaps be allowed to be true; but still it will be urged, that it is insufficient to account for matter of fact, viz. that most persons, who are either ignorant of, or never considered these deductions, do however pursue virtue themselves, and approve of it in others. I shall in the next place therefore give some account of our approbations and affections.

SECTION III.—CONCERNING APPROBATION AND AFFECTION.

869 Man is not only a sensible creature; not only capable of pleasure and pain, but capable also of foreseeing this pleasure and pain in the future consequences of things and actions; and as he is capable of knowing, so also of governing or directing the causes of them, and thereby in a great measure enabled to avoid the one and to procure the other: whence the principle of all action. And therefore, as pleasure and pain are not indifferent to him, nor out of his power, he pursues the former and avoids the latter; and therefore also those things which are causes of them are not indifferent, but he pursues or avoids them also, according to their different tendency. That which he pursues for its own sake, which is only pleasure, is called an End; that which he apprehends to be apt to produce pleasure, he calls Good, and approves of, i.e. judges a proper means to attain his end, and therefore looks upon it as an object of choice; and that which is pregnant with misery he disapproves of and stiles evil. And this good and evil are not only barely approved of, or the contrary; but whenever viewed in imagination (since man considers himself as existing hereafter, and is concerned for his welfare then as well as now) they have a present pleasure or pain annexed to them, proportionable to what is apprehended to follow them in real existence; which pleasure or pain arising from the prospect of future pleasure or pain is properly called Passion, and the desire consequent thereupon, Affection.

870 And as by reflecting upon pleasure there arises in our minds a desire of it; and on pain, an aversion from it (which necessarily follows from supposing us to be sensible creatures, and is no more than saying, that all things are not physically indifferent to us) so also by reflecting upon good or evil, the same desires and aversions are excited, and are distinguished into love and hatred. And from love and hatred variously modified, arise all those other desires and aversions which are promiscuously stiled passions or affections; and are generally thought to be implanted in our nature originally, like the power of receiving sensitive pleasure or pain. And when placed on inanimate objects, are these following; hope, fear, despair and its opposite, for which we want a name.

SECTION IV.—APPROBATION AND AFFECTION CONSIDERED
WITH REGARD TO MERIT, OR THE LAW OF ESTEEM.

- 871 IF a man in the pursuit of pleasure or happiness (by which is meant the sum total of pleasure) had to do only with inanimate creatures, his approbation and affections would be as described in the foregoing section. But, since he is dependent with respect to his happiness, not only on these, but also on all rational agents, creatures like himself, which have the power of governing or directing good and evil, and of acting for an end ; there will arise different means of happiness, and consequently different pursuits, though tending to the same end, happiness ; and therefore different approbations and affections, and the contrary ; which deserve particularly to be considered.
- 872 That there will arise different means of happiness, is evident from hence, viz. that rational agents, in being subservient to our happiness, are not passive, but voluntary. And therefore since we are in pursuit of that, to obtain which we apprehend the concurrence of their wills necessary, we cannot but approve of whatever is apt to procure this concurrence. And that can be only the pleasure or pain expected from it by them. And therefore as I perceive that my happiness is dependent on others, I cannot but judge whatever I apprehend to be proper to excite them to endeavour to promote my happiness, to be a means of happiness, i.e. I cannot but approve it. And since the annexing pleasure to their endeavours to promote my happiness is the only thing in my power to this end, I cannot but approve of the annexing pleasure to such actions of theirs as are undertaken upon my account. Hence to approve of a rational agent as a means of happiness, is different from the approbation of any other means ; because it implies an approbation also of an endeavour to promote the happiness of that agent, in order to excite him and others to the same concern for my happiness for the future.

And because what we approve of we also desire (as has been shewn above) hence also we desire the happiness of any agent that has done us good. And therefore love or hatred, when placed on a rational object, has this difference from the love and hatred of other things, that it implies a desire of, and consequently a pleasure in the happiness of the object beloved ; or if hated, the contrary.

873 The foundation of this approbation and love (which, as we have seen, consists in his voluntary contributing to our happiness) is called the merit of the agent so contributing, i.e. that whereby he is entitled (upon supposition that we act like rational, sociable creatures; like creatures, whose happiness is dependent on each other's behaviour) to our approbation and love: demerit the contrary.

And this affection or quality of any action which we call merit, is very consistent with a man's acting ultimately for his own private happiness. For any particular action that is undertaken for the sake of another, is meritorious, i.e. deserves esteem, favour, and approbation from him for whose sake it was undertaken, towards the doer of it. Since the presumption of such esteem, &c. was the only motive to that action; and if such esteem, &c. does not follow, or is presumed not to follow it, such a person is reckoned unworthy of any favour, because he shews by his actions that he is incapable of being obliged by favours.

874 The mistake which some have run into, viz. that merit is inconsistent with acting upon private happiness, as an ultimate end, seems to have arisen from hence, viz. that they have not carefully enough distinguished between an inferior, and ultimate end; the end of a particular action, and the end of action in general: which may be explained thus. Though happiness, private happiness, is the proper or ultimate end of all our actions whatever, yet that particular means of happiness which any particular action is chiefly adapted to procure, or the thing chiefly aimed at by that action; the thing which, if possessed, we would not undertake that action, may, and generally is called the end of that action. As therefore happiness is the general end of all actions, so each particular action may be said to have its proper and peculiar end: thus the end of a beau is to please by his dress; the end of study, knowledge. But neither pleasing by dress, nor knowledge, are ultimate ends, they still tend or ought to tend to something farther; as is evident from hence, viz. that a man may ask and expect a reason why either of them are pursued: now to ask the reason of any action or pursuit, is only to enquire into the end of it: but to expect a reason, i.e. an end, to be assigned for an ultimate end, is absurd. To ask why I pursue happiness, will admit of no other answer than an explanation of the terms.

Why inferior ends, which in reality are only means, are too often looked upon and acquiesced in as ultimate, shall be accounted for hereafter.

875 Whenever therefore the particular end of any action is the happiness of another (though the agent designed thereby to procure to himself esteem and favour, and looked upon that esteem and favour as a means of private happiness) that action is meritorious. And the same may be said, though we design to please God, by endeavouring to promote the happiness of others. But when an agent has a view in any particular action distinct from my happiness, and that view is his only motive to that action, though that action promote my happiness to never so great a degree, yet that agent acquires no merit, i. e. he is not thereby entitled to any favour or esteem: because favour and esteem are due from me for any action, no farther than that action was undertaken upon my account. If therefore my happiness is only the pretended end of that action, I am imposed on if I believe it real, and thereby think myself indebted to the agent; and I am discharged from any obligation as soon as I find out the cheat.

But it is far otherwise when my happiness is the sole end of that particular action, i. e. (as I have explained myself above) when the agent endeavours to promote my happiness as a means to procure my favour, i. e. to make me subservient to his happiness as his ultimate end: though I know he aims at my happiness only as a means of his own, yet this lessens not the obligation.

There is one thing, I confess, which makes a great alteration in this case, and that is, whether he aims at my favour in general, or only for some particular end. Because, if he aim at my happiness only to serve himself in some particular thing, the value of my favour will perhaps end with his obtaining that particular thing: and therefore I am under less obligation (*cæteris paribus*) the more particular his expectations from me are; but under obligation I am.

876 Now from the various combinations of this which we call merit, and its contrary, arise all those various approbations and aversions; all those likings and dislikings which we call moral.

As therefore from considering those beings which are the involuntary means of our happiness or misery, there were produced in us the passions or affections of love, hatred, hope, fear, despair

and its contrary: so from considering those beings which voluntarily contribute to our happiness or misery, there arise the following. Love and hatred, (which are different from that love or hatred placed on involuntary beings; that placed on involuntary beings being only a desire to possess or avoid the thing beloved or hated; but this on voluntary agents being a desire to give pleasure or pain to the agent beloved or hated) gratitude, anger, (sometimes called by one name, resentment) generosity, ambition, honour, shame, envy, benevolence: and if there be any other, they are only, as these are, different modifications of love and hatred.

877 Love and hatred, and the foundation of them (viz. the agent beloved or hated being apprehended to be instrumental to our happiness) I have explained above. Gratitude is that desire of promoting the happiness of another upon account of some former kindness received. Anger, that desire of thwarting the happiness of another, on account of some former diskindness or injury received. Both these take place, though we hope for, or fear nothing farther from the objects of either of them, and this is still consistent with acting upon a principle of private happiness.

For though we neither hope for, nor fear any thing farther from these particular beings; yet the disposition shewn upon these occasions is apprehended to influence the behaviour of other beings towards us: i. e. other beings will be moved to promote our happiness or otherwise, as they observe how we resent favours or injuries.

878 Ambition is a desire of being esteemed. Hence a desire of being thought an object of esteem; hence of being an object of esteem; hence of doing laudable, i. e. useful actions. Generosity and benevolence are species of it. Ambition in too great a degree is called pride, of which there are several species. The title to the esteem of others, which ariseth from any meritorious action, is called honour. The pleasure arising from honour being paid to us, i. e. from others acknowledging that we are entitled to their esteem, is without a name. Modesty is the fear of losing esteem. The uneasiness or passion which ariseth from a sense that we have lost it, is called shame. So that ambition, and all those other passions and affections belonging to it, together with shame, arise from the esteem of others: which is the reason why this tribe of affections operate more strongly on us than any other, viz. because we perceive

that as our happiness is chiefly dependent on the behaviour of others, so we perceive also that this behaviour is dependent on the esteem which others have conceived of us ; and consequently that our acquiring or losing esteem, is in effect acquiring or losing happiness, and in the highest degree. And the same may be said concerning all our other affections and passions, to enumerate which, what for want of names to them, and what by the confusion of language about them, is almost impossible.

Envy will be accounted for hereafter, for a reason which will then be obvious.

879 Thus having explained what I mean by obligation and approbation ; and shewn that they are founded on and terminate in happiness : having also pointed out the difference between our approbations and affections as placed on involuntary and voluntary means of happiness ; and farther proved that these approbations and affections are not innate or implanted in us by way of instinct, but are all acquired, being fairly deducible from supposing only sensible and rational creatures dependent on each other for their happiness, as explained above : I shall in the next place endeavour to answer a grand objection to what has here been said concerning approbations and affections arising from a prospect of private happiness.

The objection is this.

880 The reason or end of every action is always known to the agent ; for nothing can move a man but what is perceived ; but the generality of mankind love and hate, approve and disapprove, immediately, as soon as any moral character either occurs in life, or is proposed to them, without considering whether their private happiness is affected with it or not : or if they do consider any moral character in relation to their own happiness, and find themselves, as to their private happiness, unconcerned in it ; or even find their private happiness lessened by it in some particular instance, yet they still approve the moral character, and love the agent : nay they cannot do otherwise. Whatever reason may be assigned by speculative men why we should be grateful to a benefactor, or pity the distressed ; yet if the grateful or compassionate mind never thought of that reason, it is no reason to him. The enquiry is not why he ought to be grateful, but why he is so.

These after-reasons therefore rather shew the wisdom and providence of our Maker, in implanting the immediate powers of these approbations (i. e. in Mr. Hutcheson's language, a moral sense) and these public affections in us, than give any satisfactory account of their origin. And therefore these public affections, and this moral sense, are quite independent on private happiness, and in reality act upon us as mere instincts.

Answer.

- 881 The matter of fact contained in this argument, in my opinion, is not to be contested ; and therefore it remains either that we make the matter of fact consistent with what we have before laid down, or give up the cause.

Now, in order to shew this consistency, I beg leave to observe, that as in the pursuit of truth we do not always trace every proposition whose truth we are examining, to a first principle or axiom, but acquiesce, as soon as we perceive it deducible from some known or presumed truth ; so in our conduct we do not always travel to the ultimate end of our actions, happiness : but rest contented, as soon as we perceive any action subservient to a known or presumed means of happiness. And these presumed truths and means of happiness whether real or otherwise, always influence us after the same manner as if they were real. The undeniable consequences of mere prejudices are as firmly adhered to as the consequences of real truths or arguments ; and what is subservient to a false (but imagined) means of happiness, is as industriously pursued as what is subservient to a true one.

- 882 Now every man, both in his pursuit after truth, and in his conduct, has settled and fixed a great many of these in his mind, which he always acts upon, as upon principles, without examining. And this is occasioned by the narrowness of our understandings : we can consider but a few things at once ; and therefore, to run every thing to the fountain-head would be tedious, through a long series of consequences : to avoid this we choose out certain truths and means of happiness, which we look upon as RESTING PLACES, in which we may safely acquiesce, in the conduct both of our understanding and practice ; in relation to the one, regarding them as axioms ; in the other, as ends. And we are more easily inclined to this, by imagining that we may safely rely upon what we call habitual

knowledge, thinking it needless to examine what we are already satisfied in. And hence it is that prejudices, both speculative and practical, are difficult to be rooted out, viz. few will examine them.

883 These RESTING PLACES are so often used as principles, that at last, letting that slip out of our minds which first inclined us to embrace them, we are apt to imagine them, not as they really are, the substitutes of principles, but, principles themselves.

And from hence, as some men have imagined innate ideas, because they forget how they came by them; so others have set up almost as many distinct instincts as there are acquired principles of acting. And I cannot but wonder why the pecuniary sense, a sense of power and party, &c. were not mentioned, as well as the moral, that of honour, order, and some others.

884 The case is really this. We first perceive or imagine some real good, i. e. fitness to promote our natural happiness, in those things which we love and approve of. Hence (as was above explained) we annex pleasure to those things. Hence those things and pleasure are so tied together and associated in our minds, that one cannot present itself, but the other will also occur. And the association remains even after that which at first gave them the connection is quite forgot, or perhaps does not exist, but the contrary. An instance or two may perhaps make this clear. How many men are there in the world who have as strong a taste for money as others have for virtue; who count so much money, so much happiness; nay, even sell their happiness for money; or to speak more properly, make the having money, without any design or thought of using it, their ultimate end? But was this propensity to money, born with them? or rather, did not they at first perceive a great many advantages from being possessed of money, and from thence conceive a pleasure of having it, thence desire it, thence endeavour to obtain it, thence receive an actual pleasure in obtaining it, thence desire to preserve the possession of it? Hence by dropping the intermediate steps between money and happiness, they join money and happiness immediately together, and content themselves with the phantastical pleasure of having it, and make that which was at first pursued only as a means, be to them a real end, and what their real happiness or misery consists in. Thus the connection between money and happiness remains in

the mind ; though it has long since ceased between the things themselves.

885 The same might be observed concerning the thirst after knowledge, fame, &c., the delight in reading, building, planting, and most of the various exercises and entertainments of life. These were at first entered on with a view to some farther end, but at length become habitual amusements ; the idea of pleasure is associated with them, and leads us on still in the same eager pursuit of them, when the first reason is quite vanished, or at least out of our minds. Nay, we find this power of association so great as not only to transport our passions and affections beyond their proper bounds, both as to intenseness and duration ; as is evident from daily instances of avarice, ambition, love, revenge, &c., but also that it is able to transfer them to improper objects, and such as are of a quite different nature from those to which our reason had at first directed them. Thus being accustomed to resent an injury done to our body by a retaliation of the like to him that offered it, we are apt to conceive the same kind of resentment, and often express it in the same manner, upon receiving hurt from a stock or a stone ; whereby the hatred which we are used to place on voluntary beings, is substituted in the room of that aversion which belongs to involuntary ones. The like may be observed in most of the other passions above mentioned.

886 From hence also, viz. from the continuance of this association of ideas in our minds, we may be enabled to account for that (almost diabolical) passion called envy, which we promised to consider.

Mr. Locke observes, and I believe very justly, that there are some men entirely unacquainted with this passion. For most men that are used to reflection, may remember the very time when they were first under the dominion of it.

Envy is generally defined to be that pain which arises in the mind from observing the prosperity of others : not of all others indefinitely, but only of some particular persons. Now the examining who those particular persons whom we are apt to envy are, will lead us to the true origin of this passion. And if a man will be at the pains to consult his mind, or to look into the world, he'll find that these particular persons are always such as upon some account or other he has had a rivalship with. For when two or more are competitors for the same thing, the success of the one

must necessarily tend to the detriment of the other, or others : hence the success of my rival and misery or pain are join'd together in my mind ; and this connection or association remaining in my mind, even after the rivalship ceases, makes me always affected with pain whenever I hear of his success, though in affairs which have no manner of relation to the rivalship ; much more in those that bring that to my remembrance, and put me in mind of what I might have enjoyed had it not been for him.

Thus also we are apt to envy those persons that refuse to be guided by our judgments, and persuaded by us. For this is nothing else than a rivalship about the superiority of judgment ; and we take a secret pride, both to let the World see, and in imagining ourselves, that we are in the right.

887 There is one thing more to be observed in answer to this objection, and that is, that we do not always (and perhaps not for the most part) make this association ourselves, but learn it from others : i.e. that we annex pleasure or pain to certain things or actions because we see others do it, and acquire principles of action by imitating those whom we admire, or whose esteem we would procure : Hence the son too often inherits both the vices and the party of his father, as well as his estate : Hence national virtues and vices, dispositions and opinions : And from hence we may observe how easy it is to account for what is generally call'd the prejudice of education ; how soon we catch the temper and affections of those whom we daily converse with ; how almost insensibly we are taught to love, admire or hate ; to be grateful, generous, compassionate or cruel, &c.

What I say then in answer to the forementioned objection is this : ‘That though it be necessary in order to solve the principal actions of human life to suppose a moral sense (or what is signified by that name) and also publick affections ; yet I deny that this moral sense, or these publick affections, are innate or implanted in us. They are acquired either from our own observation or the imitation of others.’

THOMAS HOBBES

Leviathan

[First printed, 1651.]



CHAPTER X.—OF POWER, WORTH, DIGNITY, HONOUR, AND WORTHINESS.

888 THE ‘power of a man,’ to take it universally, is his present means to obtain some future apparent good: and is either ‘original’ or ‘instrumental.’ ‘Natural power,’ is the eminence of the faculties of body or mind; as extraordinary strength, form, prudence, arts, eloquence, liberality, nobility. ‘Instrumental’ are those powers, which acquired by these, or by fortune, are means and instruments to acquire more: as riches, reputation, friends, and the secret working of God, which men call good luck. For the nature of power is in this point like to fame, increasing as it proceeds; or like the motion of heavy bodies, which the further they go, make still the more haste. The greatest of human powers, is that which is compounded of the powers of most men, united by consent, in one person, natural or civil, that has the use of all their powers depending on his will; such as is the power of a commonwealth: or depending on the wills of each particular; such as is the power of a faction or of divers factions leagued. Therefore to have servants, is power; to have friends, is power: for they are strengths united.

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Reputation of power, is power; because it draweth with it the

adherence of those that need protection. So is reputation of love of a man's country, called popularity, for the same reason.

Also, what quality soever maketh a man beloved, or feared of many; or the reputation of such quality, is power; because it is a means to have the assistance and service of many. Good success is power; because it maketh reputation of wisdom, or good fortune; which makes men either fear him, or rely on him.

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The sciences are small power; because not eminent; and therefore, not acknowledged in any man; nor are at all, but in a few, and in them, but of a few things. For science is of that nature, as none can understand it to be, but such as in a good measure have attained it.

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889 'Honourable' is whatsoever possession, action, or quality, is an argument and sign of power.

And therefore to be honoured, loved, or feared of many, is honourable; as arguments of power. To be honoured of few or none, 'dishonourable.'

Dominion and victory is honourable; because acquired by power; and servitude, for need, or fear, is dishonourable.

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Nor does it alter the case of honour, whether an action, so it be great and difficult, and consequently a sign of much power, be just or unjust: for honour consisteth only in the opinion of power. Therefore the ancient heathen did not think they dishonoured, but greatly honoured the gods, when they introduced them in their poems, committing rapes, thefts, and other great but unjust, or unclean acts: insomuch as nothing is so much celebrated in Jupiter, as his adulteries; nor in Mercury, as his frauds and thefts: of whose praises, in a hymn of Homer, the greatest is this, that being born in the morning, he had invented music at noon, and before night, stolen away the cattle of Apollo from his herdsmen.

Also amongst men, till there were constituted great commonwealths, it was thought no dishonour to be a pirate, or a highway thief; but rather a lawful trade, not only amongst the Greeks, but also amongst all other nations, as is manifest by the histories of ancient time.

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CHAPTER XI.—OF THE DIFFERENCE OF MANNERS.

890 BY manners I mean not here decency of behaviour; as how one should salute another, or how a man should wash his mouth, or pick his teeth before company, and such other points of the ‘small morals;’ but those qualities of mankind that concern their living together in peace and unity. To which end we are to consider that the felicity of this life consisteth not in the repose of a mind satisfied. For there is no such *finis ultimus*, utmost aim, nor *summum bonum*, greatest good, as is spoken of in the books of the old moral philosophers. Nor can a man any more live, whose desires are at an end, than he whose senses and imaginations are at a stand. Felicity is a continual progress of the desire, from one object to another, the attaining of the former being still but the way to the latter. The cause whereof is that the object of man’s desire is not to enjoy once only, and for one instant of time, but to assure for ever the way of his future desire. And therefore the voluntary actions and inclinations of all men, tend not only to the procuring, but also to the assuring of a contented life; and differ only in the way which ariseth partly from the diversity of passions in divers men; and partly from the difference of the knowledge or opinion each one has of the causes which produce the effect desired.

So that in the first place, I put for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death. And the cause of this is not always that a man hopes for a more intensive delight than he has already attained to, or that he cannot be content with a moderate power; but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more. And from hence it is that kings, whose power is greatest, turn their endeavours to the assuring it at home by laws, or abroad by wars; and when that is done, there succeedeth a new desire; in some, of fame from new conquest; in others, of ease and sensual pleasure; in others, of admiration, or being flattered for excellence in some art, or other ability of the mind.

891 Competition of riches, honour, command, or other power, inclineth to contention, enmity, and war; because the way of one competitor, to the attaining of his desire, is to kill, subdue, supplant, or repel the other. Particularly, competition of praise, inclineth to

a reverence of antiquity. For men contend with the living, not with the dead; to these ascribing more than due, that they may obscure the glory of the other.

Desire of ease, and sensual delight, disposeth men to obey a common power, because by such desires a man doth abandon the protection that might be hoped for from his own industry and labour. Fear of death, and wounds, disposeth to the same, and for the same reason. On the contrary, needy men, and hardy, not contented with their present condition, as also all men that are ambitious of military command, are inclined to continue the causes of war; and to stir up trouble and sedition, for there is no honour military but by war, nor any such hope to mend an ill game, as by causing a new shuffle.

Desire of knowledge, and arts of peace, inclineth men to obey a common power: for such desire, containeth a desire of leisure; and consequently protection from some other power than their own.

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Fear of oppression, disposeth a man to anticipate, or to seek aid by society: for there is no other way by which a man can secure his life and liberty.

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CHAPTER XIII.—OF THE NATURAL CONDITION OF MANKIND AS CONCERNING THEIR FELICITY AND MISERY.

892 NATURE hath made men so equal, in the faculties of the body and mind; as that though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body, or of quicker mind than another, yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man and man, is not so considerable, as that one man can thereupon claim to himself any benefit, to which another may not pretend, as well as he. For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others, that are in the same danger with himself.

And as to the faculties of the mind, setting aside the arts grounded upon words, and especially that skill of proceeding upon general and infallible rules, called science; which very few have, and but in few things; as being not a native faculty, born with us; nor

attained, as prudence, while we look after somewhat else, I find yet a greater equality amongst men than that of strength. For prudence is but experience ; which equal time, equally bestows on all men, in those things they equally apply themselves unto. That which may perhaps make such equality incredible, is but a vain conceit of one's own wisdom, which almost all men think they have in a greater degree than the vulgar ; that is, than all men but themselves, and a few others, whom by fame or for concurring with themselves, they approve. For such is the nature of men, that howsoever they may acknowledge many others to be more witty, or more eloquent, or more learned ; yet they will hardly believe there be many so wise as themselves ; for they see their own wit at hand, and other men's at a distance. But this proveth rather that men are in that point equal, than unequal. For there is not ordinarily a greater sign of the equal distribution of anything, than that every man is contented with his share.

893 From this equality of ability, ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies ; and in the way to their end, which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only, endeavour to destroy or subdue one another. And from hence it comes to pass, that where an invader hath no more to fear than another man's single power ; if one plant, sow, build, or possess a convenient seat, others may probably be expected to come prepared with forces united, to dispossess and deprive him, not only of the fruit of his labour, but also of his life or liberty. And the invader again is in the like danger of another.

And from this diffidence of one another, there is no way for any man to secure himself, so reasonable, as anticipation ; that is, by force, or wiles, to master the persons of all men he can, so long, till he see no other power great enough to endanger him : and this is no more than his own conservation requireth, and is generally allowed. Also because there be some, that taking pleasure in contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest, which they pursue farther than their security requires ; if others, that otherwise would be glad to be at ease within modest bounds, should not by invasion increase their power, they would not be able, long time, by standing only on their defence, to subsist.

And by consequence, such augmentation of dominion over men being necessary to a man's conservation, it ought to be allowed him.

Again, men have no pleasure, but on the contrary a great deal of grief, in keeping company, where there is no power able to overawe them all. For every man looketh that his companion should value him, at the same rate he sets upon himself: and upon all signs of contempt, or undervaluing, naturally endeavours, as far as he dares, (which amongst them that have no common power to keep them in quiet, is far enough to make them destroy each other,) to extort a greater value from his contemners, by damage; and from others, by the example.

894 So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory.

The first, maketh men invade for gain; the second, for safety; and the third, for reputation. The first use violence, to make themselves masters of other men's persons, wives, children, and cattle; the second, to defend them; the third, for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue, either direct in their persons, or by reflection in their kindred, their friends, their nation, their profession, or their name.

895 Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war, as is of every man, against every man. For 'war' consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of 'time' is to be considered in the nature of war, as it is in the nature of weather. For as the nature of foul weather lieth not in a shower or two of rain, but in an inclination thereto of many days together; so the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is 'peace.'

Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man, the same is consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain, and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation,

nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and, which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

896 It may seem strange to some man, that has not well weighed these things, that Nature should thus dissociate, and render men apt to invade and destroy one another; and he may therefore, not trusting to this inference, made from the passions, desire perhaps to have the same confirmed by experience. Let him therefore consider with himself, when taking a journey, he arms himself, and seeks to go well accompanied; when going to sleep, he locks his doors; when even in his house, he locks his chests; and this when he knows there be laws, and public officers, armed, to revenge all injuries shall be done him; what opinion he has of his fellow-subjects, when he rides armed; of his fellow-citizens, when he locks his doors; and of his children and servants, when he locks his chests. Does he not there as much accuse mankind by his actions as I do by my words? But neither of us accuse man's nature in it. The desires and other passions of man are in themselves no sin. No more are the actions that proceed from those passions, till they know a law that forbids them; which till laws be made they cannot know, nor can any law be made till they have agreed upon the person that shall make it.

It may peradventure be thought there was never such a time nor condition of war as this; and I believe it was never generally so, over all the world, but there are many places where they live so now. For the savage people in many places of America, except the government of small families, the concord whereof dependeth on natural lust, have no government at all, and live at this day in that brutish manner, as I said before. Howsoever, it may be perceived what manner of life there would be, where there were no common power to fear, by the manner of life which men that have formerly lived under a peaceful government, use to degenerate into in a civil war.

But though there had never been any time, wherein particular men were in a condition of war one against another; yet in all

times, kings, and persons of sovereign authority, because of their independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators; having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their forts, garrisons, and guns upon the frontiers of their kingdoms; and continual spies upon their neighbours; which is a posture of war. But because they uphold thereby the industry of their subjects; there does not follow from it that misery which accompanies the liberty of particular men.

897 To this war of every man, against every man, this also is consequent; that nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, have there no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law: where no law, no injustice. Force and fraud, are in war the two cardinal virtues. Justice and injustice are none of the faculties neither of the body nor mind. If they were, they might be in a man that were alone in the world, as well as his senses, and passions. They are qualities that relate to men in society, not in solitude. It is consequent also to the same condition, that there be no propriety, no dominion, no ‘mine’ and ‘thine’ distinct; but only that to be every man’s, that he can get; and for so long, as he can keep it. And thus much for the ill condition, which man by mere nature is actually placed in; though with a possibility to come out of it, consisting partly in the passions, partly in his reason.

898 The passions that incline men to peace, are fear of death; desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain them. And reason suggesteth convenient articles of peace, upon which men may be drawn to agreement. These articles are they which otherwise are called the Laws of Nature: whereof I shall speak more particularly, in the two following chapters.

CHAPTER XIV.—OF THE FIRST AND SECOND NATURAL LAWS, AND OF CONTRACTS.

899 ‘THE right of Nature,’ which writers commonly call *jus naturale*, is the liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life; and consequently, of doing anything, which in his own

judgment and reason he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto.

By ‘liberty,’ is understood, according to the proper signification of the word, the absence of external impediments: which impediments may oft take away part of a man’s power to do what he would; but cannot hinder him from using the power left him, according as his judgment and reason shall dictate to him.

900 A ‘law of Nature,’ *lex naturalis*, is a precept or general rule, found out by reason, by which a man is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same; and to omit that, by which he thinketh it may be best preserved. For though they that speak of this subject, use to confound *jus* and *lex*, ‘right’ and ‘law:’ yet they ought to be distinguished: because ‘right,’ consisteth in liberty to do, or to forbear; whereas ‘law,’ determineth and bindeth to one of them; so that law and right differ as much as obligation and liberty; which in one and the same matter are inconsistent.

901 And because the condition of man, as hath been declared in the precedent chapter, is a condition of war of every one against every one; in which case every one is governed by his own reason; and there is nothing he can make use of, that may not be a help unto him, in preserving his life against his enemies; it followeth, that in such a condition, every man has a right to everything; even to one another’s body. And therefore, as long as this natural right of every man to everything endureth, there can be no security to any man, how strong or wise soever he be, of living out the time, which Nature ordinarily alloweth men to live. And consequently it is a precept, or general rule of reason, ‘that every man ought to endeavour peace, as far as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek, and use, all helps, and advantages of war.’ The first branch of which rule, containeth the first, and fundamental law of Nature; which is, ‘to seek peace, and follow it.’ The second, the sum of the right of Nature: which is, ‘by all means we can, to defend ourselves.’

902 From this fundamental law of Nature, by which men are commanded to endeavour peace, is derived this second law; ‘that a man be willing, when others are so too, as far-forth, as for peace, and defence of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against

other men, as he would allow other men against himself.' For as long as every man holdeth this right, of doing anything he liketh ; so long are all men in the condition of war. But if other men will not lay down their right, as well as he ; then there is no reason for any one to divest himself of his : for that were to expose himself to prey, which no man is bound to, rather than to dispose himself to peace. This is that law of the Gospel ; ' whatsoever you require that others should do to you, that do ye to them.' And that law of all men, *quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris.*

903 To 'lay down' a man's 'right' to anything, is to 'divest' himself of the 'liberty,' of hindering another of the benefit of his own right to the same. For he that renounceth, or passeth away his right, giveth not to any other man a right which he had not before ; because there is nothing to which every man had not right by Nature : but only standeth out of his way, that he may enjoy his own original right, without hindrance from him ; not without hindrance from another. So that the effect which redoundeth to one man, by another man's defect of right, is but so much diminution of impediments to the use of his own right original.

Right is laid aside, either by simply renouncing it ; or by transferring it to another. By 'simply renouncing ;' when he cares not to whom the benefit thereof redoundeth. By 'transferring ;' when he intendeth the benefit thereof to some certain person or persons. And when a man hath in either manner abandoned, or granted away his right ; then is he said to be 'obliged,' or 'bound,' not to hinder those, to whom such right is granted, or abandoned, from the benefit of it : and that he 'ought,' and it is his 'duty,' not to make void that voluntary act of his own : and that such hindrance is 'injustice,' and 'injury,' as being *sine jure* ; the right being before renounced, or transferred. So that 'injury,' or 'injustice,' in the controversies of the world, is somewhat like to that, which in the disputationes of scholars is called 'absurdity.' For as it is there called an absurdity, to contradict what one maintained in the beginning : so in the world it is called injustice and injury voluntarily to undo that from the beginning he had voluntarily done. The way by which a man either simply renounceth, or transferreth his right, is a declaration, or signification, by some voluntary and sufficient sign, or signs, that he doth so renounce, or transfer ;

or hath so renounced, or transferred the same, to him that accepteth it. And these signs are either words only, or actions only ; or, as it happeneth most often, both words and actions. And the same are the ‘bonds,’ by which men are bound, and obliged : bonds, that have their strength, not from their own nature, for nothing is more easily broken than a man’s word, but from fear of some evil consequence upon the rupture.

904 Whosoever a man transferreth his right, or renounceth it, it is either in consideration of some right reciprocally transferred to himself ; or for some other good he hopeth for thereby. For it is a voluntary act : and of the voluntary acts of every man, the object is some ‘good to himself.’ And therefore there be some rights, which no man can be understood by any words, or other signs, to have abandoned or transferred. As first a man cannot lay down the right of resisting them that assault him by force, to take away his life ; because he cannot be understood to aim thereby at any good to himself. The same may be said of wounds, and chains, and imprisonment : both because there is no benefit consequent to such patience ; as there is to the patience of suffering another to be wounded, or imprisoned ; as also because a man cannot tell, when he seeth men proceed against him by violence, whether they intend his death or not. And lastly the motive and end for which this renouncing, and transferring of right is introduced, is nothing else but the security of a man’s person, in his life, and in the means of so preserving life, as not to be weary of it. And therefore if a man by words, or other signs, seem to despoil himself of the end, for which those signs were intended ; he is not to be understood as if he meant it, or that it was his will ; but that he was ignorant of how such words and actions were to be interpreted.

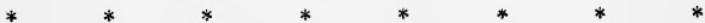
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CHAPTER XV.—OF OTHER LAWS OF NATURE.

905 FROM that law of Nature, by which we are obliged to transfer to another, such rights, as being retained, hinder the peace of mankind, there followeth a third ; which is this, ‘that men perform their covenants made ;’ without which, covenants are in vain, and but empty words ; and the right of all men to all things remaining, we are still in the condition of war.

And in this law of Nature consisteth the fountain and original of ‘justice.’ For where no covenant hath preceded, there hath no right been transferred, and every man has right to everything ; and consequently, no action can be unjust. But when a covenant is made, then to break it is ‘unjust :’ and the definition of ‘injustice,’ is no other than ‘the not performance of covenant.’ And whatsoever is not unjust, is ‘just.’

906 But because covenants of mutual trust, where there is a fear of not performance on either part, as hath been said in the former chapter, are invalid ; though the original of justice be the making of covenants ; yet injustice actually there can be none, till the cause of such fear be taken away ; which while men are in the natural condition of war, cannot be done. Therefore before the names of just and unjust can have place, there must be some coercive power, to compel men equally to the performance of their covenants, by the terror of some punishment, greater than the benefit they expect by the breach of their covenant ; and to make good that propriety, which by mutual contract men acquire, in recompense of the universal right they abandon : and such power there is none before the erection of a commonwealth. And this is also to be gathered out of the ordinary definition of justice in the schools : for they say, that ‘justice is the constant will of giving to every man his own.’ And therefore where there is no ‘own,’ that is no propriety, there is no injustice ; and where there is no coercive power erected, that is, where there is no commonwealth, there is no propriety ; all men having right to all things : therefore where there is no commonwealth, there nothing is unjust. So that the nature of justice, consisteth in keeping of valid covenants : but the validity of covenants begins not but with the constitution of a civil power, sufficient to compel men to keep them ; and then it is also that propriety begins.



Of Human Nature

[First printed, 1650.]

CHAPTER IX.

07 10. PITY is imagination or fiction of future calamity to ourselves, proceeding from the sense of another man's calamity. But when it lighteth on such as we think have not deserved the same, the compassion is greater, because then there appeareth more probability that the same may happen to us: for, the evil that happeneth to an innocent man, may happen to every man. But when we see a man suffer for great crimes, which we cannot easily think will fall upon ourselves, the pity is the less. And therefore men are apt to pity those whom they love: for, whom they love, they think worthy of good, and therefore not worthy of calamity. Thence it is also, that men pity the vices of some persons at the first sight only, out of love to their aspect. The contrary of pity is hardness of heart, proceeding either from slowness of imagination, or some extreme great opinion of their own exemption from the like calamity, or from hatred of all or most men.

08 13. There is a passion that hath no name; but the sign of it is that distortion of the countenance which we call laughter, which is always joy: but what joy, what we think, and wherein we triumph when we laugh, is not hitherto declared by any. That it consisteth in wit, or as they call it, in the jest, experience confuteth: for men laugh at mischances and indecencies, wherein there lieth no wit nor jest at all. And forasmuch as the same thing is no more ridiculous when it groweth stale or usual, whatsoever it be that moveth laughter, it must be new and unexpected. Men laugh often (especially such as are greedy of applause from everything they do well) at their own actions performed never so little beyond their own expectations; as also at their own jests: and in this

case it is manifest, that the passion of laughter proceedeth from a sudden conception of some ability in himself that laugheth. Also men laugh at the infirmities of others, by comparison wherewith their own abilities are set off and illustrated. Also men laugh at jests, the wit whereof always consisteth in the elegant discovering and conveying to our minds some absurdity of another: and in this case also the passion of laughter proceedeth from the sudden imagination of our own odds and eminency: for what is else the recommending of ourselves to our own good opinion, by comparison with another man's infirmity or absurdity? For when a jest is broken upon ourselves, or friends of whose dishonour we participate, we never laugh thereat. I may therefore conclude, that the passion of laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from a sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly; for men laugh at the follies of themselves past, when they come suddenly to remembrance, except they bring with them any present dishonour. It is no wonder therefore that men take heinously to be laughed at or derided, that is, triumphed over. Laughing without offence, must be at absurdities and infirmities abstracted from persons, and when all the company may laugh together: for, laughing to one's self putteth all the rest into jealousy, and examination of themselves. Besides, it is vain glory, and an argument of little worth, to think the infirmity of another sufficient matter for his triumph.

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- 909 17. There is yet another passion sometimes called love, but more properly good-will or charity. There can be no greater argument to a man, of his own power, than to find himself able not only to accomplish his own desires, but also to assist other men in theirs: and this is that conception wherein consisteth charity. In which, first, is contained that natural affection of parents to their children, which the Greeks call *στρογγύλη*, as also, that affection wherewith men seek to assist those that adhere unto them. But the affection wherewith men many times bestow their benefits on strangers, is not to be called charity, but either contract, whereby they seek to purchase friendship; or fear, which maketh them to purchase peace.

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HENRY HOME, LORD KAMES

Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion

[First edition, 1751. Reprinted here from the second edition, 1758.]



ESSAY II. OF THE FOUNDATION AND PRINCIPLES OF THE LAW OF NATURE.

CHAPTER I.—OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE LAW OF NATURE.

10 IN searching for the foundation of the laws of our nature, the following reflections readily occur. In the first place, two things cannot be more intimately connected than a being and its actions: for the connection is that of cause and effect. Such as the being is, such must its actions be. In the next place, the several classes into which nature has distributed living creatures, are not more distinguishable by an external form, than by an internal constitution, which manifests itself in a certain uniformity of conduct, peculiar to each species. In the third place, any action conformable to the common nature of the species, is considered by us as regular and good. It is according to order, and according to nature. But if there exist a being, with a constitution different from that of its kind, the actions of this being, though conformable to its own peculiar constitution, will, to us, appear whimsical and disorderly. We shall have a feeling of disgust, as if we saw a man with two heads or four hands. These reflections lead us to the foundation of the laws of our nature. They are to be derived from the common nature of man, of which every person partakes who is not a monster.

911 As the foregoing observations make the groundwork of all morality, it may not be improper to enlarge a little upon them. Looking around, we find creatures of very different kinds, both as to their external and internal constitutions. Each species having a peculiar nature, ought to have a peculiar rule of action resulting from its nature. We find this to hold in fact ; and it is extremely agreeable to observe, how accurately the laws of each species are adjusted to the external frame of the individuals which compose it, and to the circumstances in which they are placed, so as to procure the conveniences of life in the best manner, and to produce regularity and consistency of conduct. To give but one instance : The laws which govern sociable creatures, differ widely from those which govern the savage and solitary. Among solitary creatures, who have no mutual connection, there is nothing more natural, or more orderly, than to make food one of another. But for creatures in society to live after this manner, behoved to be the effect of jarring and inconsistent principles. No such disorderly appearance is discovered upon the face of this globe. There is, as above observed, a harmony betwixt the internal and external constitution of the several classes of animals ; and this harmony obtains so universally, as to afford a delightful prospect of deep design, effectively carried into execution. The common nature of every class of beings is perceived by us as perfect ; and if, in any instance, a particular being swerve from the common nature of its kind, the action, upon that account, is accompanied with a sense of disorder and wrong. In a word, it is according to order, that the different sorts of living creatures should be governed by laws adapted to their peculiar nature. We consider it as fit and proper that it should be so ; and it is a beautiful scene to find creatures acting according to their nature, and thereby acting uniformly, and according to a just tenor of life.

912 The force of this reasoning cannot, at any rate, be resisted by those who admit of final causes. We make no difficulty to pronounce, that a species of beings are made for such and such an end, who are of such and such a nature. A lion is made to purchase the means of life by his claws. Why? because such is his nature and constitution. A man is made to purchase the means of life by the help of others, in society. Why? because, from the constitution both of his body and mind, he cannot live comfortably

but in society. It is thus we discover for what end we were designed by nature, or the author of nature. And the same chain of reasoning points out to us the laws by which we ought to regulate our actions: for acting according to nature, is acting so as to answer the end of our creation.

CHAPTER II.—OF THE MORAL SENSE.

13 HAVING shown that the nature of man is the foundation of the laws that ought to govern his actions, it will be necessary, with all possible accuracy, to trace out human nature, so far as regards the present subject. If we can happily accomplish this part of our undertaking, it will be easy, in the synthetical method, to deduce the laws which ought to regulate our conduct. And we shall examine, in the first place, after what manner we are related to beings and things around us: for this speculation will lead to the point in view.

As we are placed in a great world, surrounded with beings and things, some beneficial, some hurtful; we are so constituted, that scarce any object is indifferent to us. It either gives pleasure or pain. Sounds, tastes, and smells, are either agreeable or disagreeable. This is the most of all remarkable in the objects of sight, which affect us in a more lively manner than the objects of any other external sense. Thus, a spreading oak, a verdant plain, a large river, are objects which afford great delight. A rotten carcase, a distorted figure, create aversion, which, in some cases, goes the length of horror.

14 With regard to objects of sight, whatever gives pleasure, is said to be beautiful; whatever gives pain, is said to be ugly. The terms beauty and ugliness, in their original signification, are confined to objects of sight. And indeed such objects, being more highly agreeable or disagreeable than others, deserve well to be distinguished by a proper name. But though this be the proper meaning of the terms beauty and ugliness; yet, as it happens with words which convey a more lively idea than ordinary, the terms are applied in a figurative sense to almost every thing which carries a high relish or disgust, where these sensations have not a proper name of their own. Thus, we talk of a beautiful theorem, a beautiful thought, and a beautiful passage in music. And this way of

speaking has, by common use, become so familiar, that it is scarce reckoned a figurative expression.

- 915** Objects considered simply as existing, without relation to any end proposed, or any designing agent, are to be placed in the lowest rank or order with respect to beauty and ugliness. But when external objects, such as works of art, are considered with relation to some end proposed, we feel a higher degree of pleasure or pain. Thus, a building regular in all its parts, pleases the eye upon the very first view: but considered as a house for dwelling in, which is the end proposed, it pleases still more, supposing it to be well fitted to its end. A similar sensation arises in observing the operations of a well-ordered state, where the parts are nicely adjusted to the ends of security and happiness.
- 916** This perception of beauty, in works of art or design, which is produced not barely by a sight of the object, but by viewing the object in a certain light, as fitted to some use, and as related to some end, includes in it what is termed approbation: for approbation, when applied to works of art, means precisely our being pleased with them, or conceiving them beautiful in the view of being fitted to their end. Approbation and disapprobation do not apply to the first or lowest class of beautiful and ugly objects. To say that we approve a sweet taste, or a flowing river, is really saying no more, than barely that we are pleased with such objects. But the term is justly applied to works of art, because it means more than being pleased with such an object merely as existing. It imports a peculiar beauty, which is perceived, upon considering the object as fitted to the use intended.
- 917** It must be further observed, to avoid obscurity, that the beauty which arises from the relation of an object to its end, is independent of the end itself, whether good or bad, whether beneficial or hurtful: for the perception arises from considering its fitness to the end proposed, whatever that end be.
- 918** When we take the end itself under consideration, there is discovered a beauty or ugliness of a higher kind than the two former. A beneficial end proposed, strikes us with a very peculiar pleasure: and approbation belongs also to this feeling. Thus, the mechanism of a ship is beautiful, in the view of means well fitted to an end. But the end itself, of carrying on commerce, and procuring so many conveniences to mankind, exalts the object, and heightens our

approbation and pleasure. By an end, I mean that to which any thing is fitted, which it serves to procure and bring about, whether it be an ultimate end, or subordinate to something farther. Hence, what is considered as an end in one view, may be considered as a means in another. But so far as it is considered as an end, the degree of its beauty depends upon the degree of its usefulness. Approbation, in many instances, terminates upon the thing itself, abstracted from the intention of an agent. This intention, as good or bad, coming into view, gives rise to a species of beauty or deformity, different from those above set forth ; as shall be presently explained. Let it be only kept in view, that as the end or use of a thing is an object of greater dignity and importance than the means, the approbation bestowed on the former rises higher than that bestowed on the latter.

919 These three orders of beauty may be blended together in many different ways, to have very different effects. If an object in itself beautiful, be ill fitted to its end, it will, upon the whole, be disagreeable. This may be exemplified, in a house, regular in its architecture, and beautiful to the eye, but incommodious for dwelling. If there be in an object an aptitude to a bad end, it will, upon the whole, be disagreeable, though it have the second modification of beauty in the greatest perfection. A constitution of government, formed with the most perfect art for enslaving the people, may be an instance of this. If the end proposed be good, but the object not well fitted to the end, it will be beautiful or ugly, as the goodness of the end, or unfitness of the means, are prevalent. Of this instances will occur at first view, without being suggested.

920 The foregoing modifications of beauty and deformity, apply to all objects, animate and inanimate. A voluntary agent produceth a peculiar species of beauty and deformity, which may readily be distinguished from all others. The actions of living creatures are more interesting than the actions of matter. The instincts, and principles of action of the former, give us more delight, than the blind powers of the latter ; or, in other words, are more beautiful. No one can doubt of this fact, who is in any degree conversant with the poets. In Homer every thing liyes. Even darts and arrows are endued with voluntary motion. And we are sensible, that nothing animates a poem more than the frequent use of this figure.

921 Hence a new circumstance in the beauty and deformity of actions,

considered as proceeding from intention, deliberation, and choice. This circumstance, which is of the utmost importance in the science of morals, concerns chiefly human actions : for we discover little of intention, deliberation and choice, in the actions of inferior creatures. Human actions are not only agreeable or disagreeable, beautiful or deformed, in the different views above mentioned, but are further distinguished in our perception of them, as fit, right, and meet to be done, or as unfit, unmeet, and wrong to be done. These are simple perceptions, capable of no definition, and which cannot otherways be explained, than by making use of the words that are appropriated to them. But let any man attentively examine what passeth in his mind, when the object of his thought is an action proceeding from deliberate intention, and he will soon discover the meaning of these words, and the perceptions which they denote. Let him but attend to a deliberate action, suggested by filial piety, or suggested by gratitude ; such action will not only be agreeable to him, and appear beautiful, but will be agreeable and beautiful, as fit, right, and meet to be done. He will approve the action in that quality, and he will approve the actor for having done his duty. This distinguishing circumstance intitles the beauty and deformity of human actions to peculiar names : they are termed moral beauty and moral deformity. Hence the morality and immorality of human actions ; and the power or faculty by which we perceive this difference among actions, passeth under the name of the moral sense.

922 It is but a superficial account which is given of morality by most writers, that it depends upon approbation and disapprobation. For it is evident, that these terms are applicable to works of art, and to objects beneficial and hurtful, as well as to morality. It ought further to have been observed, that the approbation or disapprobation of actions, are very distinguishable from what relate to the objects now mentioned. Some actions are approved as good, and as fit, right, and meet to be done ; others are disapproved, as bad and unfit, unmeet and wrong to be done. In the one case, we approve the actor as a good man ; in the other, disapprove him as a bad man. These perceptions apply not to objects as fitted to an end, nor even to the end itself, except as proceeding from deliberate intention. When a piece of work is well executed, we approve the artificer for his skill, not for his goodness. Several things, inanimate as

well as animate, serve to extreme good ends. We approve these ends as useful in themselves, but not as morally fit and right, where they are not considered as the result of intention.

923 Of all objects whatever, human actions are the most highly delightful or disgusting, and possess the highest degree of beauty or deformity. In these every circumstance concurs : the fitness or unfitness of the means ; the goodness or badness of the end ; the intention of the actor ; which gives them the peculiar character of fit, right, and meet, or unfit, wrong, and unmeet.

Thus we find the nature of man so constituted, as to approve certain actions, and to disapprove others ; to consider some actions as fit, right, and meet to be done, and to consider others as unfit, unmeet, and wrong. What distinguisheth actions, to make them objects of the one or the other perception, will be explained in the following chapter. And with regard to some of our actions, another circumstance may perhaps be discovered, different from any that have been mentioned, which will be a foundation for the well-known terms of duty and obligation, and consequently for a rule of conduct, that, in the strictest sense, may be termed a law. But at present it is sufficient to have explained in general, that we are so constituted, as to perceive a right and wrong in actions. And this is what strongly characterises the laws which govern the actions of mankind. With regard to all other beings, we have no data to discover the laws of their nature, other than their frame and constitution. We have the same data to discover the laws of our own nature. We have, over and above, a peculiar sense of approbation and disapprobation, to point out to us what we ought to do, and what we ought not to do. And one thing extremely remarkable will be explained afterwards, that the laws which are fitted to the nature of man, and to his external circumstances, are the same which we approve by the moral sense.

CHAPTER III.—OF DUTY AND OBLIGATION.

924 THOUGH these terms are of the utmost importance in morals, I know not that any author hath attempted to explain them, by pointing out those principles or perceptions which they express. This defect I shall endeavour to supply, by tracing these terms to their proper source, without which the system of morals cannot be

complete, because these terms point out to us the most precise and essential branch of morality.

Lord Shaftesbury, to whom the world is much indebted for his inestimable writings, has clearly and convincingly made out, ‘that virtue is the good, and vice the ill of every one.’ But he has not proved virtue to be our duty, otherways than by showing it to be our interest ; which comes not up to the idea of duty. For this term plainly implies somewhat indispensable in our conduct ; what we ought to do, what we ought to submit to. Now, a man may be considered as foolish, for acting against his interest ; but he cannot be considered as wicked or vicious. His Lordship indeed, in his essay upon virtue, approaches to an explanation of duty and obligation, by asserting the subordinacy of the self affections to the social. But though he states this as a proposition to be made out, he drops it in the after part of his work, and never again brings it into view.

925 Hutcheson, in his essay upon beauty and virtue, founds the morality of actions on a certain quality of actions, which procures approbation and love to the agent. But this account of morality is imperfect, because it scarce includes justice, or any thing which may be called duty. The man who, confining himself strictly to duty, is true to his word, and avoids harming others, is a just and moral man ; is intitled to some share of esteem ; but will never be the object of love or friendship. He must show a disposition to the good of mankind, of his friends at least, and neighbours ; he must exert acts of humanity and benevolence, before he can hope to procure the affection of others.

926 But it is chiefly to be observed, that, in this account of morality, the terms right, obligation, duty, ought and should, have no distinct meaning ; which shows, that the entire foundation of morality is not taken in by this author. It is true, that, towards the close of his work, he attempts to explain the meaning of the term obligation. But as criticizing upon authors, those especially who have promoted the cause of virtue, is not an agreeable task ; I would not chuse to spend time, in showing that he is unsuccessful in his attempt. The slightest attention to the subject will make it evident. For his whole account of obligation is no more than, either ‘ a motive from self-interest, sufficient to determine all those who duly consider it, to a certain course of action ; ’ which surely is

not moral obligation : or ‘a determination, without regard to our own interest, to approve actions, and to perform them ; which determination shall also make us displeased with ourselves, and uneasy upon having acted contrary to it ;’ in which sense, he says, there is naturally an obligation upon all men to benevolence. But this account falls far short of the true idea of obligation ; because it makes no distinction betwixt it and that simple approbation of the moral sense, which can be applied to heroism, magnanimity, generosity, and other exalted virtues, as well as to justice. Duty however belongs to the latter only ; and no man reckons himself under an obligation to perform any action that belongs to the former.

927 Neither is the author of the treatise upon human nature more successful, when he endeavours to resolve the moral sense into pure sympathy¹. According to this author, there is no more in morality, but approving or disapproving an action, after we discover, by reflection, that it tends to the good or hurt of society. This would be by far too faint a principle to control our irregular appetites and passions. It would scarce be sufficient to restrain us from incroaching upon our friends and neighbours ; and, with regard to strangers, would be the weakest of all restraints. We shall, by and by, show, that morality has a more solid foundation. In the mean time, it is of importance to observe, that, upon this author’s system, as well as Hutcheson’s, the noted terms of duty, obligation, ought and should, &c. are perfectly unintelligible.

928 We shall now proceed to explain these terms, by pointing out the perceptions which they express. And, in performing this task, there will be discovered a wonderful and beautiful contrivance of the author of our nature, to give authority to morality, by putting the self affections in a due subordination to the social. The moral sense has, in part, been explained above ; that by it we perceive some actions, as being fit, right, and meet to be done, and others, as being unfit, unmeet, and wrong. When this observation is applied to particulars, it is an evident fact, that we have a sense of fitness in kindly and beneficent actions ; we approve ourselves and others for performing actions of this kind : as, on the other hand, we disapprove the unsociable, peevish, and hard-hearted.

¹ Vol. iii. pt. 3.

But in one set of actions, there is an additional circumstance which is regarded by the moral sense. Actions directed against others, by which they are harmed in their persons, in their fame, or in their goods, are the objects of a peculiar perception. They are perceived not only as unfit to be done, but as absolutely wrong to be done, and what, upon no account, we ought to do. What is here asserted, is a matter of fact, which can admit of no other proof than an appeal to every man's own perceptions. Lay prejudice aside, and give fair play to what passes in the mind. I ask no other concession. There is no man, however irregular in his life and manners, however poisoned by a wrong education, but must be sensible of this fact. And indeed the words which are to be found in all languages, and which are perfectly understood in the communication of sentiments, are an evident demonstration of it. Duty, obligation, ought and should, in their common meaning, would be empty sounds, unless upon supposition of such a perception.

929 The case is the same with regard to gratitude to benefactors, and performing of engagements. We perceive these to be our duty in the strictest sense, and what we are indispensably obliged to. We do not consider them as in any degree under our own power. We have the consciousness of necessity, and of being bound and tied to performance, as if we were under some external compulsion.

930 It is proper here to be remarked, that benevolent and generous actions are not objects of this peculiar sense. Hence, such actions, though considered as fit and right to be done, are not however considered to be our duty, but as virtuous actions beyond what is strictly our duty. Benevolence and generosity are more beautiful, and more attractive of love and esteem, than justice. Yet, not being so necessary to the support of society, they are left upon the general footing of approbatory pleasure; while justice, faith, truth, without which society could not at all subsist, are objects of the foregoing peculiar sense, to take away all shadow of liberty, and to put us under a necessity of performance.

931 Dr. Butler, a manly and acute writer, hath gone farther than any other, to assign a just foundation for moral duty. He considers conscience or reflection¹, 'as one principle of action, which,

¹ Preface to the later editions of his sermons.

compared with the rest as they stand together in the nature of man, plainly bears upon it marks of authority over all the rest, and claims the absolute direction of them all, to allow or forbid their gratification.' And his proof of this proposition is, 'that a disapprobation of reflection is in itself a principle manifestly superior to a mere propension.' Had this admirable writer handled the subject more professedly than he had occasion to do in a preface, it is more than likely he would have put it in a clear light. But he has not said enough to afford that light the subject is capable of. For it may be observed, in the first place, that a disapprobation of reflection is far from being the whole of the matter. Such disapprobation is applied to moroseness, selfishness, and many other partial affections, which are, however, not considered in a strict sense as contrary to our duty. And it may be doubted, whether a disapprobation of reflection be, in every case, a principle superior to a mere propension. We disapprove a man who neglects his private affairs, and gives himself up to love, hunting, or any other amusement: nay, he disapproves himself. Yet from this we cannot fairly conclude, that he is guilty of any breach of duty, or that it is unlawful for him to follow his propension. We may observe, in the next place, what will be afterwards explained, that conscience, or the moral sense, is none of our principles of action, but their guide and director. It is still of greater importance to observe, that the authority of conscience does not consist merely in an act of reflection. It arises from a direct perception, which we have upon presenting the object, without the intervention of any sort of reflection. And the authority lies in this circumstance, that we perceive the action to be our duty, and what we are indispensably bound to perform. It is in this manner that the moral sense, with regard to some actions, plainly bears upon it the marks of authority over all our appetites and passions. It is the voice of God within us which commands our strictest obedience, just as much as when his will is declared by express revelation.

932 What is above laid down is an analysis of the moral sense, but not the whole of it. A very important branch still remains to be unfolded. And, indeed, the more we search into the works of nature, the more opportunity there is to admire the wisdom and goodness of the sovereign architect. In the matters above mentioned, performing of promises, gratitude, and abstaining from

harming others, we have not only the peculiar sense of duty and obligation : in transgressing these duties, we have not only the sense of vice and wickedness, but we have further the sense of merited punishment, and dread of its being inflicted upon us. This dread may be but slight in the more venial transgressions. But, in crimes of a deep dye, it rises to a degree of anguish and despair. Hence that remorse of conscience, the most severe of all tortures, which histories are full of, upon the commission of certain crimes. This dread of merited punishment operates for the most part so strongly upon the imagination, that every unusual accident, every extraordinary misfortune, is by the criminal judged to be a punishment purposely inflicted upon him. During prosperity, he makes a shift to blunt the stings of his conscience. But no sooner does he fall into distress, or into any depression of mind, than his conscience lays fast hold of him : his crime stares him in the face ; and every accidental misfortune is converted into a real punishment. ‘ And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us ; and we would not hear : therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child ; and ye would not hear ? therefore behold also, his blood is required !’

933 One material circumstance is here to be remarked, which widens the difference still more betwixt the primary and secondary virtues. As justice, and the other primary virtues, are more essential to society, than generosity, benevolence, or any other secondary virtue, they are likewise more universal. Friendship, generosity, softness of manners, form peculiar characters, and serve to distinguish one man from another. But the sense of justice, and of the other primary virtues, is universal. It belongs to man as such. Though it exists in very different degrees of strength, there perhaps never was a human creature absolutely void of it. And it makes a delightful appearance in the human constitution, that even where this sense is weak, as it is in some individuals, it notwithstanding retains its authority as the director of their conduct. If there be any sense of justice, or of abstaining from injury, it must distinguish right from wrong, what we ought to do from what we ought not to do ; and,

¹ Genesis xlii. 21, 22.

by that very distinguishing faculty, justly claims to be our guide and governor. This consideration may serve to justify human laws, which make no distinction among men, as endued with a stronger or weaker sense of morality.

934 And here we must pause a moment, to indulge some degree of admiration upon this part of the human system. Man is evidently intended to live in society ; and because there can be no society among creatures who prey upon one another, it was necessary, in the first place, to provide against mutual injuries. Further, man is the weakest of all creatures separately, and the very strongest in society ; therefore mutual assistance is the principal end of society ; and to this end it was necessary, that there should be mutual trust and reliance upon engagements, and that favours received should be thankfully repaid. Now, nothing can be more finely adjusted, than the human heart, to answer these purposes. It is not sufficient that we approve every action which is essential to the preservation of society. It is not sufficient, that we disapprove every action which tends to its dissolution. Approbation or disapprobation merely, is not sufficient to subject our conduct to the authority of a law. But the approbation in this case has the peculiar modification of duty, that these actions are what we ought to perform, and what we are indispensably bound to perform. This circumstance converts into a law, what without it can only be considered as a rational measure, and a prudential rule of conduct. Nor is any thing omitted to give it the most complete character of a law. The transgression is attended with apprehension of punishment, nay with actual punishment ; as every misfortune which befalls the transgressor is considered by him as a punishment. Nor is this the whole of the matter. Sympathy is a principle implanted in the breast of every man : we cannot hurt another without suffering for it, which is an additional punishment. And we are still further punished for our injustice or ingratitude, by incurring thereby the aversion and hatred of mankind.



CHAPTER V.—OF THE PRINCIPLES OF ACTION.

- 935 IN the three chapters immediately foregoing, we have taken some pains to inquire into the moral sense, and to analyze it into its different parts. Our present task must be to inquire into those principles in our nature which move us to action. These must be distinguished from the moral sense ; which, properly speaking, is not a principle of action. Its province, as shall forthwith be explained, is to instruct us, which of our principles of action we may indulge, and which of them we must restrain. It is the voice of God within us, regulating our appetites and passions, and showing us what are lawful, what unlawful.
- 936 In a treatise upon the law of nature, it is of great importance to trace out the principles by which we are incited to action. It is above observed, that the laws of nature can be no other than rules of action adapted to our nature. Now, our nature, so far as concerns action, is made up of appetites and passions, which move us to action, and of the moral sense, by which these appetites and passions are governed. The moral sense, of itself, is in no case intended to be the first mover : but it is an excellent second, by the most authoritative of all motives, that of duty. Nature is not so rigid to us her favourite children, as to leave our conduct upon the motive of duty solely. A more masterly and kindly hand is visible in the architecture of man. We are impelled to motion by the very constitution of our nature ; and to prevent our being carried too far, or in a wrong direction, conscience is set as at the helm. That such is our nature, may be made evident from induction. Were conscience alone, in any case, to be the sole principle of action, it might be expected in matters of justice, of which we have the strongest sense, as our indispensable duty. We find this however no exception from the general plan. For is not love of justice a principle of action common to all men ? This principle gives the first impulse, which is finely seconded by the influence and authority of conscience. It may safely therefore be pronounced, that no action is a duty, to the performance of which we are not prompted by some natural motive or principle. To make such an action our duty, would be to lay down a rule of conduct contrary to our nature, or that has no foundation in our nature. Actions to which we are incited by a natural principle, are some of them

authorised, others condemned by conscience ; but conscience, or the moral sense, is not, in any case, the sole principle or motive of action. Nature has assigned it a different province. This is a truth which has been little attended to by those who have given us systems of natural laws. No wonder they have gone astray. Let this truth be kept close in view, and it will put an end to many a controversy about these laws. If, for example, it be laid down as a primary law of nature, That we are strictly bound to advance the good of all, regarding our own interest no farther than as it makes a part of the general happiness, we may safely reject such a law, as inconsistent with our nature ; unless it be made appear, that there is a principle of benevolence in man which prompts him to an equal pursuit of the happiness of all. To found this disinterested scheme wholly upon the moral sense, would be a vain attempt. The moral sense, as above observed, is our guide only, not our mover. Approbation or disapprobation of these actions, to which, by some natural principle, we are antecedently directed, is all that can result from it. If it be laid down, on the other hand, That we ought to regard ourselves only in all our actions ; and that it is folly, if not vice, to concern ourselves for others ; such a law can never be admitted, unless upon the supposition that self-love is our only principle of action.

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937 A full account of our principles of action would be an endless theme. But as it is proposed to confine the present short essay to the laws which govern social life, we shall have no occasion to inquire into any principles of action, but what are directed upon others ; dropping those which have self alone for their object. And, in this inquiry, we set out with the following question, In what sense are we to hold a principle of universal benevolence, as belonging to human nature ? This question is of importance in the science of morals : for, as observed above, universal benevolence cannot be a duty, if we be not antecedently prompted to it by a natural principle. When we consider a single man, abstracted from all circumstances and all connections, we are not conscious of any benevolence to him ; we feel nothing within us that prompts us to advance his happiness. If one be agreeable at first sight, and attract any degree of affection, it is owing to looks, manners, or behaviour.

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Dogs have, by nature, an affection for the human species ; and upon this account, puppies run to the first man they see, show marks of fondness, and play about his feet. There is no such general fondness of man to man by nature. Certain circumstances are always required to produce and call it forth. Distress indeed never fails to beget sympathy. The misery of the most unknown gives us pain, and we are prompted by nature to afford relief. But when there is nothing to call forth our sympathy ; where there are no peculiar circumstances to interest us, or beget a connection, we rest in a state of indifference, and are not conscious of wishing either good or ill to the person. Those moralists, therefore, who require us to lay aside all partial affection, and to act upon a principle of equal benevolence to all men, require us to act upon a principle, which, in truth, has no place in our nature.

938 In the manner now mentioned, a principle of universal benevolence does certainly not exist in man. Let us next inquire if it exist in any other manner. The happiness of mankind is an object agreeable to the mind in contemplation ; and good men have a sensible pleasure in every study or pursuit by which they can promote it. It must indeed be acknowledged, that benevolence is not equally directed to all men, but gradually decreaseth, according to the distance of the object, till it dwindle away to nothing. But here comes in a happy contrivance of nature, to supply the want of benevolence towards distant objects ; which is, to give power to an abstract term, such as, our religion, our country, our government, or even mankind, to raise benevolence or public spirit in the mind. The particular objects under each of these classes, considered singly and apart, may have little or no force to produce affection ; but when comprehended under one general view, they become an object that dilates and warms the heart. In this manner, a man is enabled to embrace in his affection all mankind : and, in this sense, man, without question, is endued with a principle of universal benevolence.

939 That man must have a great share of indifference in his temper, who can reflect upon this branch of human nature without some degree of emotion. There is perhaps not one scene to be met with, in the natural or moral world, where more of design, and of consummate wisdom, are displayed, than in this under consideration. The authors, who, impressed with reverence for human nature,

have endeavoured to exalt it to the highest pitch, could none of them stretch their imagination beyond a principle of equal benevolence to every individual. And a very fine scheme it is in idea. But, unluckily, it is entirely of the Utopian kind, altogether unfit for life and action. It hath escaped the consideration of these authors, that man is by nature of a limited capacity, and that his affection, by multiplication of objects, instead of being increased, is split into parts, and weakened by division. A principle of universal equal benevolence, by dividing the attention and affection, instead of promoting benevolent actions, would in reality be an obstruction to them. The mind would be distracted by the multiplicity of objects that have an equal influence, so as to be eternally at a loss where to begin. But the human system is better adjusted, than to admit of such disproportion between ability and affection. The chief objects of a man's love are his friends and relations. He reserves some share to bestow on his neighbours. His affection lessens gradually, in proportion to the distance of the object, till it vanish altogether. But were this the whole of human nature, with regard to benevolence, man would be but an abject creature. By a very happy contrivance, objects which, because of their distance, have little or no influence, are made by accumulation, and by being gathered together in one general view, to have the very strongest effect ; exceeding, in many instances, the most lively affection that is bestowed upon a particular object. By this happy contrivance, the attention of the mind, and its affections, are preserved entire, to be bestowed upon general objects, instead of being dissipated among an endless number of individuals. Nothing more ennobles human nature than this principle or spring of action ; and at the same time, nothing is more wonderful, than that a general term, to which a very faint, if any idea, is affixed, should be the foundation of a more intense affection than is bestowed, for the most part, upon particular objects, how attractive soever. When we talk of our country, our religion, our government, the ideas annexed to these general terms are, at best, obscure and indistinct. General terms are extremely useful in language ; serving, like mathematical signs, to communicate our thoughts in a summary way. But the use of them is not confined to language. They serve for a much nobler purpose ; to excite us to generous and benevolent actions, of the most exalted kind ; not confined to individuals, but grasping whole societies, towns, countries.

kingdoms, nay all mankind. By this curious mechanism, the defect of our nature is amply remedied. Distant objects, otherways insensible, are rendered conspicuous. Accumulation makes them great, and greatness brings them near the eye. The affection is preserved, to be bestowed entire, as upon a single object. And, to say all in one word, this system of benevolence, which is really founded in human nature, and not the invention of man, is infinitely better contrived to advance the good and happiness of mankind, than any Utopian system that ever has been produced by the warmest imagination.

940 Upon the opposite system, of absolute selfishness, there is no occasion to lose a moment. It is evidently chimerical, because it has no foundation in human nature. It is not more certain, that there exists the creature man, than that he hath principles of action directed entirely upon others ; some to do good, and others to do mischief. Who can doubt of this, when friendship, compassion, gratitude, on the one hand ; and, on the other, malice and resentment, are considered ? It hath indeed been observed, that we indulge such passions and affections merely for our own gratification. But no person can relish this observation, who is in any measure acquainted with human nature. The social affections are in fact the source of the deepest afflictions, as well as of the most exalted pleasures, as has been fully laid open in the foregoing essay. In a word, we are evidently formed by nature for society, and for indulging the social, as well as the selfish passions ; and therefore to contend, that we ought to regard ourselves only, and to be influenced by no principles but what are selfish, is directly to fly in the face of nature, and to lay down a rule of conduct inconsistent with our nature.

941 These systems being laid aside, as deviating from the nature of man, the way lies open to come at what are his true and genuine principles of action. The first thing that nature consults, is the preservation of her creatures. Hence the love of life is made the strongest of all instincts. Upon the same foundation, pain is in a greater degree the object of aversion, than pleasure is of desire. Pain warns us of what tends to our dissolution, and thereby is a strong guard to self-preservation. Pleasure is often sought after unwarily, and by means dangerous to health and life. Pain comes in as a monitor of our danger ; and nature, consulting our preservation in the first place, and our gratification in the second only,

wisely gives pain more force to draw us back, than it gives pleasure to push us forward.

- 942 The second principle of action is self-love, or desire of our own happiness and good. This is a stronger principle than benevolence, or love bestowed upon others ; and in that respect is wisely ordered ; because every man has more power, knowledge, and opportunity, to promote his own good than that of others. Thus the good of individuals is principally trusted to their own care. It is agreeable to the limited nature of such a creature as man, that it should be so ; and, consequently, it is wisely ordered, that every man should have the strongest affection for himself.
- 943 The foregoing principles having self for their object, come not properly under the present undertaking. They are barely mentioned, to illustrate, by opposition, the following principles, which regard others. Of this sort, the most universal is the love of justice, without which there could be no society. Veracity is another principle not less universal. Fidelity, a third principle, is circumscribed within narrower bounds ; for it cannot exist without a peculiar connection betwixt two persons, to found a reliance on the one side, which requires on the other a conduct corresponding to the reliance. Gratitude is a fourth principle of action, universally acknowledged. And benevolence possesses the last place, diversified by its objects, and exerting itself more vigorously or more faintly, in proportion to the distance of particular objects, and the grandeur of those that are general. This principle of action has one remarkable quality, that it operates with much greater force to relieve those in distress, than to promote positive good. In the case of distress, sympathy comes to its aid ; and, in that circumstance, it acquires the name of compassion.
- 944 These several principles of action are ordered with admirable wisdom, to promote the general good, in the best and most effectual manner. We act for the general good, when we act upon these principles, even when it is not our immediate aim. The general good is an object too remote, to be the sole impulsive motive to action. It is better ordered, that, in most instances, individuals should have a limited aim, which they can readily accomplish. To every man is assigned his own task. And if every man do his duty, the general good will be promoted much more effectually, than if it were the aim in every single action.

945 The above-mentioned principles of action belong to man as such, and constitute what may be called the common nature of man. Many other principles exert themselves upon particular objects, in the instinctive manner, without the intervention of any sort of reasoning or reflection, which also belong to man as such ; appetite for food, animal love, &c. Other particular appetites, passions, and affections, such as ambition, avarice, envy, &c. constitute the peculiar nature of individuals ; because these are distributed among individuals in very different degrees. It belongs to the science of ethics, to treat of these particular principles of action. All that needs here be observed of them is, that it is the aim of the general principle of self-love, to obtain gratification to these particular principles.

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CHAPTER VII.—OF JUSTICE AND INJUSTICE.

946 JUSTICE is that moral virtue which guards property, and gives authority to covenants. And as it is made out above, that justice, being essentially necessary to the maintenance of society, is one of those primary virtues which are enforced by the strongest natural laws, it would be unnecessary to say more upon the subject, were it not for a doctrine espoused by the author of a treatise upon human nature, that justice, so far from being one of the primary virtues, is not even a natural virtue, but established in society by a sort of tacit convention, founded upon a notion of public interest. The figure which this author deservedly makes in the learned world, is too considerable, to admit of his being passed over in silence. And as it is of great importance to creatures who live in society, to be made sensible upon how firm a basis justice is erected, a chapter expressly upon that subject may perhaps not be unacceptable to the reader.

Our author's doctrine, so far as it concerns that branch of justice by which property is secured, comes to this : That, in a state of nature, there can be no such thing as property ; and that the idea of property arises, after justice is established by convention, whereby every one is secured in his possessions. In opposition to this singular doctrine, there is no difficulty to make out, that we have an idea of property, antecedent to any sort of agreement or

convention ; that property is founded on a natural principle ; and that violation of property is attended with remorse, and a sense of breach of duty. In prosecuting this subject, it will appear how admirably the springs of human nature are adapted one to another, and to external circumstances.

- 947** The surface of this globe, which scarce yields spontaneously food for the wildest savages, is by labour and industry made so fruitful, as to supply man, not only with necessaries, but even with materials for luxury. Man originally made shift to support himself, partly by prey, and partly by the natural fruits of the earth. In this state he in some measure resembled beasts of prey, who devour instantly what they seize, and whose care is at an end when the belly is full. But man was not designed by nature to be an animal of prey. A tenor of life where food is so precarious, requires a constitution that can bear long fasting and immoderate eating, as occasion offers. Man is of a different make. He requires regular and frequent supplies of food, which could not be obtained in his original occupations of fishing and hunting. He found it necessary therefore to abandon this manner of life, and to become shepherd. The wild creatures, such of them as are gentle and proper for food, were brought under subjection. Hence herds of cattle, sheep, goats, &c. ready at hand for the sustenance of man. This contrivance was succeeded by another. A bit of land is divided from the common ; it is cultivated with the spade or plough ; grain is sown, and the product is stored for the use of a family. Reason and reflection prompted these improvements, which are essential to our well-being, and in a good measure necessary even for bare existence. But a matter which concerns self-preservation, is of too great moment to be left entirely to the conduct of reason. This would not be according to the analogy of nature. To secure against neglect or indolence, man is provided with a principle that operates instinctively without reflection ; and that is the hoarding disposition, common to him with several other animals. No author, I suppose, will be so bold as to deny this disposition to be natural and universal. It would be shameless to deny it, considering how solicitous every man is after a competency, and how anxious the plurality are to swell that competency beyond all bounds. The hoarding appetite, while moderate, is not graced with a proper name. When it exceeds just bounds, it is known by the name of avarice.

948 The compass I have taken is large, but the shortest road is not always the smoothest or most patent. I come now to the point, by putting a plain question, What sort of creature would man be, endued as he is with a hoarding principle, but with no sense or notion of property? He hath a constant propensity to hoard for his own use; conscious at the same time that his stores are not less free to others than to himself;—racked thus perpetually betwixt the desire of appropriation, and consciousness of its being scarce practicable. I say more; the hoarding principle is an instinct obviously calculated for assisting reason, in moving us to provide against want. This instinct, like all others in the human soul, ought to be a cause adequate to the effect which is intended to be accomplished by it. But this it cannot be, independent of a sense of property. For what effectual provision can be made against want, when the stores of every individual are, without any check from conscience, left free to the depredations of the whole species? Here would be a palpable defect or inconsistency in the nature of man. If I could suppose this to be his case, I should believe him to be a creature made in haste, and left unfinished. I am certain there is no such inconsistency to be found in any other branch of human nature; nor indeed, so far as we can discover, in any other creature that is endued with the hoarding principle. Every bee inhabits its own cell, and feeds on its own honey. Every crow has its own nest; and punishment is always applied, when a single stick happens to be pilfered. But we find no such inconsistency in man. The cattle tamed by an individual, and the field cultivated by him, were held universally to be his own from the beginning. A relation is formed betwixt every man and the fruits of his own labour, the very thing we call property, which he himself is sensible of, and of which every other is equally sensible. Yours and mine are terms in all languages, familiar among savages, and understood even by children. This is a matter of fact, which every human creature can testify.

949 This reasoning may be illustrated by many apt analogies. I shall mention one in particular. Veracity, and a disposition to believe what is affirmed for truth, are corresponding principles, which make one entire branch of the human nature. Veracity would be of no use were men not disposed to believe; and, abstracting from veracity, a disposition to believe, would be a dangerous quality;

for it would lay us open to fraud and deceit. There is precisely the same correspondence betwixt the hoarding principle and the sense of property. The latter is useless without the former; witness animals of prey, who having no occasion for property, have no notion of it. The former again, without the latter, is altogether insufficient to produce the effect for which it is intended by nature.

950 Thus it appears clear, that the sense of property does not owe its existence to society. But in a matter of so great importance in the science of morals, I cannot rest satisfied with a successful defence. I aim at a complete victory, by insisting on a proposition directly opposite to that of my antagonist, viz. That society owes its existence to the sense of property; or at least, that without this sense no society ever could have been formed. In the proof of this proposition, we have already made a considerable progress, by evincing, that man by his nature is a hoarding animal, and loves to store for his own use. In order to the conclusion, we have but one farther step to make; which is, to consider what originally would have been the state of man, supposing him destitute of the sense of property. The answer is extremely obvious, That it would have been a state of universal war;—of men preying upon each other;—of robbing and pilfering the necessaries of life, where-ever found, without regard to industry, or the connection that is formed betwixt an individual and the fruits of his own labour. Courage and bodily strength would have stood in place of right, and nothing left for the weak, but to hide themselves and their goods, under ground, or in inaccessible places. And to do Hobbes justice, who, as well as our author, denies the sense of property to be natural, he fairly owns this reasoning to be just, and boldly asserts, that the state of nature is a state of war, all against all. In a word, destitute of the sense of property, men would naturally be enemies to each other, not less than they are to wolves and foxes at present. Now, if this must have been the original condition of man, let our author say, by what over-ruling power, by what miracle, individuals so disposed ever came to unite in society. We may pronounce with great assurance, that so signal a revolution in the state of man could never have been compassed by natural means. Nothing can be more evident, than that relying upon the sense of property, and the prevalence of justice, a few individuals ventured at first to unite for mutual defence and mutual support; and finding the manifold

comforts of such a state, that they afterwards gradually united into larger and larger societies.

951 It must not be overlooked, that the sense of property is fortified by another principle. Every man has a peculiar affection for what he calls his own. He applies his skill and industry with great alacrity to improve his own subject : his affection to it grows with the time of his possession ; and he puts a much greater value upon it, than upon any subject of the same kind that belongs to another.

952 But this is not all that is involved in the sense of property. We not only suffer pain in having our goods taken from us by force ; for that would happen were they destroyed or lost by accident. We have the sense of wrong and injustice. The person who robs us has the same sense, and every mortal who beholds the action, considers it as vicious, and contrary to right.

953 Judging it not altogether sufficient to have overturned the foundation of our author's doctrine, we proceed to make some observations upon it, in order to show how ill it hangs together.

And, in the first place, he appears to reason not altogether consistently in making out his system. He founds justice on a general sense of common interest¹. And yet, at no greater distance than a few pages, he endeavours to make out², and does it successfully, that public interest is a motive too remote and too sublime to affect the generality of mankind, and to operate, with any force, in actions so contrary to private interest, as are frequently those of justice and common honesty.

954 In the second place, abstracting from the sense of property, it does not appear, that a sense of common interest would necessarily lead to such a regulation, as that every man should have the undisturbed enjoyment of what he hath acquired by his industry or good fortune. Supposing no sense of property, I do not see it inconsistent with society, to have a Lacedemonian constitution, that every man may lawfully take what by address he can make himself master of, without force or violence. The depriving us of that to which we have no right, would be doing little more than drinking in our brook, or breathing in our air. At any rate, such a refined regulation would never be considered of importance enough, to be established upon the very commencement of society.

¹ Vol. iii. p. 59.

² Vol. iii. p. 43.

It must come late, if at all, and be the effect of long experience, and great refinement in the art of living. It is very true, that, abstaining from the goods of others, is a regulation, without which society cannot well subsist. But the necessity of this regulation ariseth from the sense of property, without which a man would suffer little pain in losing his goods, and would have no notion of wrong or injustice. There appears not any way to evade the force of this reasoning, other than peremptorily to deny the reality of the sense of property. Others may, but our author, after all, cannot with a good grace do it. An appeal may be safely made to his own authority. For is it not evidently this sense, which hath suggested to him the necessity, in the institution of every society, to secure individuals in their possessions? He cannot but be sensible, that, abstracting from the affection for property, the necessity would be just nothing at all. But our perceptions operate calmly and silently; and there is nothing more common, than to strain for far-fetched arguments in support of conclusions which are suggested by the simplest and most obvious perceptions.

955 A third observation is, that since our author resolves all virtue into sympathy, why should he with-hold the same principle from being the foundation of justice? Why should not sympathy give us a painful sensation, in depriving our neighbour of the goods he has acquired by industry, as well as in depriving him of his life or limb? For it is a fact too evident to be denied, that many men are more uneasy at the loss of their goods, than at the loss of a member.

956 And, in the last place, were justice founded on a general sense of common interest only, it behoved to be the weakest sense in human nature; especially where injustice is committed against a stranger, with whom we are not in any manner connected. Now, this is contrary to all experience. The sense of injustice is one of the strongest that belongs to humanity, and is also of a peculiar nature. It involves a sense of duty which is transgressed, and of meriting punishment for the transgression. Had our author but once reflected upon these peculiarities, he never could have been satisfied with the slight foundation he gives to justice; for these peculiarities are altogether unaccountable upon his system.

957 I shall close this reasoning with one reflection in general upon

the whole. The subject in dispute is a strong instance how dangerous it is to erect schemes, and assert propositions, without relation to facts and experiments;—not less dangerous in morals than in natural philosophy. Had our author examined human nature, and patiently submitted to the method of induction, by making a complete collection of facts, before venturing upon general propositions; I am positive he would have been as far as any man from maintaining, that justice is an artificial virtue, and that property is the child of society. Discovering this edifice of his to be a mere castle in the air, without the slightest foundation, he would have abandoned it without any reluctance.

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JOHN LOCKE
An Essay
concerning Human Understanding

[First edition, 1690.]



BOOK I.

CHAPTER II.—NO INNATE PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES.

958 1. *No moral principles so clear and so generally received as the fore-mentioned speculative maxims.*—If those speculative maxims whereof we discoursed in the foregoing chapter, have not an actual universal assent from all mankind, as we there proved, it is much more visible concerning practical principles, that they come short of an universal reception ; and I think it will be hard to instance any one moral rule which can pretend to so general and ready an assent as ‘What is, is,’ or to be so manifest a truth as this, ‘That it is impossible for the same thing to be, and not to be.’ Whereby it is evident, that they are farther removed from a title to be innate ; and the doubt of their being native impressions on the mind is stronger against these moral principles than the other. Not that it brings their truth at all in question. They are equally true, though not equally evident. Those speculative maxims carry their own evidence with them ; but moral principles require reasoning and discourse, and some exercise of the mind, to discover the certainty of their truth. They lie not open as natural characters engraven on the mind ; which if any such were, they must needs be visible by themselves,

and by their own light be certain and known to everybody. But this is no derogation to their truth and certainty; no more than it is to the truth or certainty of the three angles of a triangle being equal to two right ones, because it is not so evident as, ‘The whole is bigger than a part,’ nor so apt to be assented to at first hearing. It may suffice that these moral rules are capable of demonstration; and therefore it is our own fault if we come not to a certain knowledge of them. But the ignorance wherein many men are of them, and the slowness of assent wherewith others receive them, are manifest proofs that they are not innate, and such as offer themselves to their view without searching.

959 2. *Faith and justice not owned as principles by all men.*—Whether there be any such moral principles wherein all men do agree, I appeal to any who have been but moderately conversant in the history of mankind, and looked abroad beyond the smoke of their own chimneys. Where is that practical truth that is universally received without doubt or question, as it must be if innate? Justice, and keeping of contracts, is that which most men seem to agree in. This is a principle which is thought to extend itself to the dens of thieves, and the confederacies of the greatest villains; and they who have gone farthest towards the putting off of humanity itself, keep faith and rules of justice one with another. I grant, that outlaws themselves do this one amongst another; but it is without receiving these as the innate laws of nature. They practise them as rules of convenience within their own communities; but it is impossible to conceive that he embraces justice as a practical principle who acts fairly with his fellow-highwayman, and at the same time plunders or kills the next honest man he meets with. Justice and truth are the common ties of society; and therefore even outlaws and robbers, who break with all the world besides, must keep faith and rules of equity amongst themselves, or else they cannot hold together. But will any one say, that those that live by fraud and rapine have innate principles of truth and justice, which they allow and assent to?

960 3. *Objection. ‘Though men deny them in their practice, yet they admit them in their thoughts,’ answered.*—Perhaps it will be urged, that the tacit assent of their minds agrees to what their practice

contradicts. I answer, First, I have always thought the actions of men the best interpreters of their thoughts ; but since it is certain that most men's practice, and some men's open professions, have either questioned or denied these principles, it is impossible to establish an universal consent (though we should look for it only amongst grown men) ; without which it is impossible to conclude them innate. Secondly, It is very strange and unreasonable to suppose innate practical principles that terminate only in contemplation. Practical principles derived from nature are there for operation, and must produce conformity of action, not barely speculative assent to their truth, or else they are in vain distinguished from speculative maxims. Nature, I confess, has put into man a desire of happiness, and an aversion to misery ; these, indeed, are innate practical principles, which, as practical principles ought, do continue constantly to operate and influence all our actions without ceasing ; these may be observed in all persons and all ages, steady and universal ; but these are inclinations of the appetite to good, not impressions of truth on the understanding. I deny not that there are natural tendencies imprinted on the minds of men ; and that, from the very first instances of sense and perception, there are some things that are grateful and others unwelcome to them ; some things that they incline to, and others that they fly : but this makes nothing for innate characters on the mind, which are to be the principles of knowledge, regulating our practice.

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961 4. *Moral rules need a proof; ergo, not innate.*—Another reason that makes me doubt of any innate principles, is, that I think there cannot any one moral rule be proposed whereof a man may not justly demand a reason ; which would be perfectly ridiculous and absurd, if they were innate, or so much as self-evident ; which every innate principle must needs be, and not need any proof to ascertain its truth, nor want any reason to gain it approbation. He would be thought void of common sense who asked on the one side, or on the other side went to give a reason, why it is impossible for the same thing to be, and not to be. It carries its own light and evidence with it, and needs no other proof ; he that understands the terms assents to it for

its own sake, or else nothing will ever be able to prevail with him to do it. But should that most unshaken rule of morality, and foundation of all social virtue, ‘That one should do as he would be done unto,’ be proposed to one who never heard it before, but yet is of capacity to understand its meaning; might he not without any absurdity ask a reason why? and were not he that proposed it bound to make out the truth and reasonableness of it to him? which plainly shows it not to be innate; for if it were, it could neither want nor receive any proof, but must needs (at least as soon as heard and understood) be received and assented to as an unquestionable truth, which a man can by no means doubt of. So that the truth of all these moral rules plainly depends upon some other antecedent to them, and from which they must be deduced, which could not be if either they were innate, or so much as self-evident.

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962 6. *Virtue generally approved, not because innate, but because profitable.*—Hence naturally flows the great variety of opinions concerning the moral rules, which are to be found among men according to the different sorts of happiness they have a prospect of, or propose to themselves; which could not be, if practical principles were innate, and imprinted in our minds immediately by the hand of God. I grant the existence of God is so many ways manifest, and the obedience we owe him so congruous to the light of reason, that a great part of mankind give testimony to the law of nature; but yet I think it must be allowed, that several moral rules may receive from mankind a very general approbation, without either knowing or admitting the true ground of morality; which can only be the will and law of a God, who sees men in the dark, has in his hand rewards and punishments, and power enough to call to account the proudest offender. For God having, by an inseparable connection, joined virtue and public happiness together, and made the practice thereof necessary to the preservation of society, and visibly beneficial to all with whom the virtuous man has to do; it is no wonder that every one should not only allow, but recommend and magnify those rules to others, from whose observance of them he is sure to reap advantage to himself. He may, out of interest, as well as

conviction, cry up that for sacred, which, if once trampled on and profaned, he himself cannot be safe nor secure. This, though it takes nothing from the moral and eternal obligation which these rules evidently have, yet it shows that the outward acknowledgment men pay to them in their words proves not that they are innate principles: nay, it proves not so much as that men assent to them inwardly in their own minds, as the inviolable rules of their own practice; since we find that self-interest and the conveniences of this life make many men own an outward profession and approbation of them, whose actions sufficiently prove that they very little consider the Law-giver that prescribed these rules, nor the hell he has ordained for the punishment of those that transgress them.

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963 Principles of actions, indeed, there are lodged in men's appetites; but these are so far from being innate moral principles, that, if they were left to their full swing, they would carry men to the overturning of all morality. Moral laws are sent as a curb and restraint to these exorbitant desires, which they cannot be but by rewards and punishments that will overbalance the satisfaction any one shall propose to himself in the breach of the law. If therefore any thing be imprinted on the mind of all men as a law, all men must have a certain and unavoidable knowledge that certain and unavoidable punishment will attend the breach of it. For if men can be ignorant or doubtful of what is innate, innate principles are insisted on and urged to no purpose; truth and certainty (the things pretended) are not at all secured by them; but men are in the same uncertain, floating estate with us without them. An evident, indubitable knowledge of unavoidable punishment, great enough to make the transgression very uneligible, must accompany an innate law; unless with an innate law they can suppose an innate gospel too. I would not be here mistaken, as if, because I deny an innate law, I thought there were none but positive laws. There is a great deal of difference between an innate law and a law of nature; between something imprinted on our minds in this very original, and something that we, being ignorant of, may attain to the knowledge of by the use and due application of our natural faculties. And, I think, they equally

forsake the truth who, running into the contrary extremes, either affirm an innate law, or deny that there is a law knowable by the light of nature ; that is, without the help of positive revelation.

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BOOK II.

CHAPTER XX.—OF MODES OF PLEASURE AND PAIN.

964 1. *Pleasure and pain simple ideas.*—Amongst the simple ideas which we receive both from sensation and reflection, pain and pleasure are two very considerable ones. For as in the body there is sensation barely in itself, or accompanied with pain or pleasure ; so the thought or perception of the mind is simply so, or else accompanied also with pleasure or pain, delight or trouble, call it how you please. These, like other simple ideas, cannot be described, nor their names defined : the way of knowing them is, as of the simple ideas of the senses, only by experience. For to define them by the presence of good or evil, is no otherwise to make them known to us than by making us reflect on what we feel in ourselves, upon the several and various operations of good and evil upon our minds, as they are differently applied to or considered by us.

965 2. *Good and evil, what.*—Things then are good or evil only in reference to pleasure or pain. That we call ‘good,’ which is apt to cause or increase pleasure, or diminish pain, in us ; or else to procure or preserve us the possession of any other good, or absence of any evil. And, on the contrary, we name that ‘evil,’ which is apt to produce or increase any pain, or diminish any pleasure, in us ; or else to procure us any evil, or deprive us of any good. By ‘pleasure’ and ‘pain,’ I must be understood to mean of body or mind, as they are commonly distinguished ; though, in truth, they be only different constitutions of the mind, sometimes occasioned by disorder in the body, sometimes by thoughts in the mind.

966 3. *Our passions moved by good and evil.*—Pleasure and pain, and that which causes them, good and evil, are the hinges on which our passions turn : and if we reflect on ourselves, and observe how these, under various considerations, operate in us,—what modifications

or tempers of mind, what internal sensations (if I may so call them) they produce in us,—we may thence form to ourselves the ideas of our passions.

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967 6. *Desire.*—The uneasiness a man finds in himself upon the absence of any thing whose present enjoyment carries the idea of delight with it, is that we call ‘desire,’ which is greater or less as that uneasiness is more or less vehement. Where, by the by, it may perhaps be of some use to remark, that the chief, if not only, spur to human industry and action is uneasiness: for, whatever good is proposed, if its absence carries no displeasure nor pain with it, if a man be easy and content without it, there is no desire of it, nor endeavour after it; there is no more but a bare *velletivity*,—the term used to signify the lowest degree of desire, and that which is next to none at all, when there is so little uneasiness in the absence of any thing, that it carries a man no farther than some faint wishes for it, without any more effectual or vigorous use of the means to attain it. Desire also is stopped or abated by the opinion of the impossibility or unattainableness of the good proposed, as far as the uneasiness is cured or allayed by that consideration. This might carry our thoughts farther, were it seasonable in this place.

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CHAPTER XXI.—OF POWER.

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968 7. *Whence the ideas of liberty and necessity.*—Every one, I think, finds in himself a power to begin or forbear, continue or put an end to, several actions in himself. From the consideration of the extent of this power of the mind over the actions of the man, which every one finds in himself, arise the ideas of liberty and necessity.

969 8. *Liberty, what.*—All the actions that we have any idea of, reducing themselves, as has been said, to these two, viz., thinking and motion, so far as a man has a power to think or not to think, to move or not to move, according to the preference or direction of his own mind, so far is a man free. Wherever any performance or forbearance are not equally in a man’s power,

wherever doing or not doing will not equally follow upon the preference of his mind directing it, there he is not free, though perhaps the action may be voluntary. So that the idea of liberty is the idea of a power in any agent to do or forbear any particular action, according to the determination or thought of the mind, whereby either of them is preferred to the other; where either of them is not in the power of the agent, to be produced by him according to his volition, there he is not at liberty, that agent is under necessity. So that liberty cannot be where there is no thought, no volition, no will; but there may be thought, there may be will, there may be volition, where there is no liberty. A little consideration of an obvious instance or two may make this clear.

970 9. *Supposes the understanding and will.*—A tennis-ball, whether in motion by the stroke of a racket, or lying still at rest, is not by any one taken to be a free agent. If we inquire into the reason, we shall find it is, because we conceive not a tennis-ball to think, and consequently not to have any volition, or preference of motion to rest, or *vice versa*; and therefore has not liberty, is not a free agent; but all its both motion and rest come under our idea of necessary, and are so called. Likewise a man falling into the water (a bridge breaking under him) has not herein liberty, is not a free agent. For though he has volition, though he prefers his not falling to falling; yet the forbearance of that motion not being in his power, the stop or cessation of that motion follows not upon his volition; and therefore therein he is not free. So a man striking himself or his friend, by a convulsive motion of his arm, which it is not in his power, by volition or the direction of his mind, to stop or forbear, nobody thinks he has, in this, liberty; every one pities him, as acting by necessity and restraint.

971 10. *Belongs not to volition.*—Again: Suppose a man be carried, whilst fast asleep, into a room, where is a person he longs to see and speak with, and be there locked fast in, beyond his power to get out; he awakes, and is glad to find himself in so desirable company, which he stays willingly in, i.e., prefers his stay to going away. I ask, is not this stay voluntary? I think nobody will doubt it; and yet, being locked fast in, it is evident he is not at liberty not to stay, he has not freedom to be gone. So that

liberty is not an idea belonging to volition, or preferring; but to the person having the power of doing, or forbearing to do, according as the mind shall choose or direct. Our idea of liberty reaches as far as that power, and no farther. For wherever restraint comes to check that power, or compulsion takes away that indifferency of ability on either side to act, or to forbear acting, there liberty, and our notion of it, presently ceases.

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11. . . . Voluntary, then, is not opposed to necessary, but to involuntary. For a man may prefer what he can do, to what he cannot do; the state he is in, to its absence or change, though necessity has made it in itself unalterable.

972 12. *Liberty, what.*—As it is in the motions of the body, so it is in the thoughts of our minds: where any one is such, that we have power to take it up, or lay it by, according to the preference of the mind, there we are at liberty. A waking man, being under the necessity of having some ideas constantly in his mind, is not at liberty to think, or not to think, no more than he is at liberty, whether his body shall touch any other or no: but whether he will remove his contemplation from one idea to another, is many times in his choice; and then he is, in respect of his ideas, as much at liberty as he is in respect of bodies he rests on: he can at pleasure remove himself from one to another. But yet some ideas to the mind, like some motions to the body, are such as in certain circumstances it cannot avoid, nor obtain their absence by the utmost effort it can use. A man on the rack is not at liberty to lay by the idea of pain, and divert himself with other contemplations.

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973 13. *Necessity, what.*—Wherever thought is wholly wanting, or the power to act or forbear according to the direction of thought, there necessity takes place. This, in an agent capable of volition, when the beginning or continuation of any action is contrary to that preference of his mind, is called ‘compulsion;’ when the hindering or stopping any action is contrary to this volition, it is called ‘restraint.’ Agents that have no thought, no volition at all, are in every thing necessary agents.

974 14. *Liberty belongs not to the will.*—If this be so (as I imagine it is), I leave it to be considered, whether it may not help to put

an end to that long agitated, and I think unreasonable, because unintelligible question, viz., Whether man's will be free or no? For, if I mistake not, it follows, from what I have said, that the question itself is altogether improper; and it is as insignificant to ask whether man's will be free, as to ask whether his sleep be swift, or his virtue square: liberty being as little applicable to the will, as swiftness of motion is to sleep, or squareness to virtue. Every one would laugh at the absurdity of such a question as either of these; because it is obvious that the modifications of motion belong not to sleep, nor the difference of figure to virtue: and when any one well considers it, I think he will as plainly perceive, that liberty, which is but a power, belongs only to agents, and cannot be an attribute or modification of the will, which is also but a power.

975 15. Volition.—Such is the difficulty of explaining and giving clear notions of internal actions by sounds, that I must here warn my reader that ‘ordering, directing, choosing, preferring,’ &c. which I have made use of, will not distinctly enough express volition, unless he will reflect on what he himself does when he wills. For example: ‘Preferring,’ which seems perhaps best to express the act of volition, does it not precisely. For though a man would prefer flying to walking, yet who can say he ever wills it? Volition, it is plain, is an act of the mind knowingly exerting that dominion it takes itself to have over any part of the man, by employing it in or withholding it from any particular action. And what is the will, but the faculty to do this? And is that faculty any thing more in effect than a power,—the power of the mind to determine its thought to the producing, continuing, or stopping any action, as far as it depends on us? For, can it be denied, that whatever agent has a power to think on its own actions, and to prefer their doing or omission either to other, has that faculty called ‘will’? Will then is nothing but such a power. Liberty, on the other side, is the power a man has to do or forbear doing any particular action, according as its doing or forbearance has the actual preference in the mind; which is the same thing as to say, according as he himself wills it.

976 16. Powers belong to agents.—It is plain then that the will is nothing but one power or ability, and freedom another power or ability: so that to ask whether the will has freedom, is to ask

whether one power has another power, one ability another ability? a question at first sight too grossly absurd to make a dispute, or need an answer. For who is it that sees not, that powers belong only to agents, and are attributes only of substances, and not of powers themselves? So that this way of putting the question, viz., Whether the will be free? is in effect to ask, Whether the will be a substance, an agent? or at least to suppose it, since freedom can properly be attributed to nothing else. If freedom can with any propriety of speech be applied to power, it may be attributed to the power that is in a man to produce or forbear producing motions in parts of his body, by choice or preference; which is that which denominates him free, and is freedom itself. But if any one should ask whether freedom were free, he would be suspected not to understand well what he said; and he would be thought to deserve Midas's ears, who, knowing that 'rich' was a denomination from the possession of riches, should demand whether riches themselves were rich.

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977 29. *What determines the will.*—The will being nothing but a power in the mind to direct the operative faculties of a man to motion or rest, as far as they depend on such direction; to the question, 'What is it determines the will?' the true and proper answer is, The mind. For that which determines the general power of directing to this or that particular direction, is nothing but the agent itself exercising the power it has that particular way. If this answer satisfies not, it is plain the meaning of the question, 'What determines the will?' is this, 'What moves the mind in every particular instance to determine its general power of directing to this or that particular motion or rest?' And to this I answer, The motive for continuing in the same state or action is only the present satisfaction in it; the motive to change is always some uneasiness: nothing setting us upon the change of state, or upon any new action, but some uneasiness. This is the great motive that works on the mind to put it upon action, which for shortness' sake we will call 'determining of the will'; which I shall more at large explain.

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978 31. *Uneasiness determines the will.*—To return, then, to the inquiry, 'What is it that determines the will in regard to our

actions?' And that upon second thoughts I am apt to imagine, is not, as is generally supposed, the greater good in view, but some (and, for the most part, the most pressing) uneasiness a man is at present under. This is that which successively determines the will, and sets us upon those actions we perform. This uneasiness we may call, as it is, 'desire;' which is an uneasiness of the mind for want of some absent good. All pain of the body, of what sort soever, and disquiet of the mind, is uneasiness; and with this is always joined desire equal to the pain or uneasiness felt, and is scarce distinguishable from it. For, desire being nothing but an uneasiness in the want of an absent good, in reference to any pain felt, ease is that absent good; and till that ease be attained, we may call it desire, nobody feeling pain that he wishes not to be eased of with a desire equal to that pain, and inseparable from it. Besides this desire of ease from pain, there is another of absent positive good; and here also the desire and uneasiness is equal. As much as we desire any absent good, so much are we in pain for it. But here all absent good does not, according to the greatness it has, or is acknowledged to have, cause pain equal to that greatness; as all pain causes desire equal to itself: because the absence of good is not always a pain, as the presence of pain is. And therefore absent good may be looked on and considered without desire. But so much as there is any where of desire, so much there is of uneasiness.

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979 33. *The uneasiness of desire determines the will.*—Good and evil, present and absent, it is true, work upon the mind; but that which immediately determines the will, from time to time, to every voluntary action, is the uneasiness of desire, fixed on some absent good, either negative, as indolency to one in pain, or positive, as enjoyment of pleasure. That it is this uneasiness that determines the will to the successive voluntary actions whereof the greatest part of our lives is made up, and by which we are conducted through different courses to different ends, I shall endeavour to show both from experience and the reason of the thing.

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980 35. *The greatest positive good determines not the will, but uneasiness.*—It seems so established and settled a maxim, by the

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general consent of all mankind, that good, the greater good, determines the will, that I do not at all wonder that, when I first published my thoughts on this subject, I took it for granted ; and I imagine, that by a great many I shall be thought more excusable for having then done so, than that now I have ventured to recede from so received an opinion. But yet upon a stricter inquiry, I am forced to conclude that good, the greater good, though apprehended and acknowledged to be so, does not determine the will until our desire, raised proportionably to it, makes us uneasy in the want of it. Convince a man never so much that plenty has its advantages over poverty ; make him see and own that the handsome conveniences of life are better than nasty penury ; yet as long as he is content with the latter, and finds no uneasiness in it, he moves not ; his will is never determined to any action that shall bring him out of it. Let a man be never so well persuaded of the advantages of virtue, that it is as necessary to a man who has any great aims in this world or hopes in the next, as food to life : yet till he ‘hunger and thirsts after righteousness,’ till he feels an uneasiness in the want of it, his will will not be determined to any action in pursuit of this confessed greater good ; but any other uneasiness he feels in himself shall take place and carry his will to other actions.

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981 41. *All desire happiness.*—If it be farther asked, what it is moves desire ? I answer, Happiness, and that alone. ‘Happiness’ and ‘misery’ are the names of two extremes, the utmost bounds whereof we know not : it is what ‘eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.’ But of some degrees of both we have very lively impressions, made by several instances of delight and joy on the one side, and torment and sorrow on the other ; which, for shortness’ sake, I shall comprehend under the names of ‘pleasure’ and ‘pain,’ there being pleasure and pain of the mind as well as the body : ‘With him is fulness of joy, and pleasure for evermore :’ or, to speak truly, they are all of the mind ; though some have their rise in the mind from thought, others in the body from certain modifications of motion.

982 42. *Happiness, what.*—Happiness, then, in its full extent, is the utmost pleasure we are capable of, and misery the utmost pain ;

and the lowest degree of what can be called ‘happiness’ is so much ease from all pain, and so much present pleasure, as without which any one cannot be content. Now, because pleasure and pain are produced in us by the operation of certain objects either on our minds or our bodies, and in different degrees, therefore what has an aptness to produce pleasure in us is that we call ‘good,’ and what is apt to produce pain in us we call ‘evil’; for no other reason but for its aptness to produce pleasure and pain in us, wherein consists our happiness and misery. Farther though what is apt to produce any degree of pleasure be in itself good, and what is apt to produce any degree of pain be evil, yet it often happens that we do not call it so when it comes in competition with a greater of its sort; because when they come in competition, the degrees also of pleasure and pain have justly a preference. So that if we will rightly estimate what we call ‘good’ and ‘evil,’ we shall find it lies much in comparison: for the cause of every less degree of pain, as well as every greater degree of pleasure, has the nature of good and *vice versa*.

- 983 43. *What good is desired, what not.*—Though this be that which is called ‘good’ and ‘evil,’ and all good be the proper object of desire in general, yet all good, even seen and confessed to be so, does not necessarily move every particular man’s desire; but only that part, or so much of it, as is considered and taken to make a necessary part of his happiness.

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Thus how much soever men are in earnest and constant in pursuit of happiness, yet they may have a clear view of good, great and confessed good, without being concerned for it, or moved by it, if they think they can make up their happiness without it. Though as to pain, *that* they are always concerned for; they can feel no uneasiness without being moved. And therefore, being uneasy in the want of whatever is judged necessary to their happiness, as soon as any good appears to make a part of their portion of happiness, they begin to desire it.

- 984 44. *Why the greatest good is not always desired.*—This, I think, any one may observe in himself and others, that the greater visible good does not always raise men’s desires in proportion to the greatness it appears and is acknowledged to have; though every little trouble moves us, and sets us on work to get rid of it: the

reason whereof is evident from the nature of our happiness and misery itself. All present pain, whatever it be, makes a part of our present misery; but all absent good does not at any time make a necessary part of our present happiness, nor the absence of it make a part of our misery: if it did, we should be constantly and infinitely miserable; there being infinite degrees of happiness which are not in our possession.

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985 45. *Why, not being desired, it moves not the will.*—The ordinary necessities of our lives fill a great part of them with the uneasiness of hunger, thirst, heat, cold, weariness with labour, and sleepiness, in their constant returns, &c., to which if, besides accidental harms, we add the fantastical uneasiness (as itch after honour, power, or riches, &c.) which acquired habits by fashion, example, and education have settled in us, and a thousand other irregular desires which custom has made natural to us, we shall find that a very little part of our life is so vacant from these uneasinesses as to leave us free to the attraction of remoter absent good. We are seldom at ease, and free enough from the solicitation of our natural or adopted desires, but a constant succession of uneasinesses, out of that stock which natural wants or acquired habits have heaped up, take the will in their turns; and no sooner is one action despatched, which by such a determination of the will we are set upon, but another uneasiness is ready to set us on work. For the removing of the pains we feel, and are at present pressed with, being the getting out of misery, and consequently the first thing to be done in order to happiness, absent good, though thought on, confessed, and appearing to be good, not making any part of this unhappiness, in its absence is justled out, to make way for the removal of those uneasinesses we feel, till due and repeated contemplation has brought it nearer to our mind, given some relish of it, and raised in us some desire; which, then beginning to make a part of our present uneasiness, stands upon fair terms with the rest to be satisfied, and so, according to its greatness and pressure, comes in its turn to determine the will.

986 46. *Due consideration raises desire.*—And thus, by a due consideration, and examining any good proposed, it is in our power to raise our desires in a due proportion to the value of that good whereby, in its turn and place, it may come to work upon the will,

and be pursued. For good, though appearing and allowed ever so great, yet till it has raised desires in our minds, and thereby made us uneasy in its want, it reaches not our wills, we are not within the sphere of its activity; our wills being under the determination only of those uneasinesses which are present to us, which (whilst we have any) are always soliciting, and ready at hand to give the will its next determination; the balancing, when there is any in the mind, being only, which desire shall be next satisfied, which uneasiness first removed.

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987 47. *The power to suspend the prosecution of any desire, makes way for consideration.*—There being in us a great many uneasinesses always soliciting, and ready to determine, the will, it is natural, as I have said, that the greatest and most pressing should determine the will to the next action; and so it does for the most part, but not always. For the mind having in most cases, as is evident in experience, a power to suspend the execution and satisfaction of any of its desires, and so all, one after another, is at liberty to consider the objects of them, examine them on all sides, and weigh them with others. In this lies the liberty man has; and from the not using of it right, comes all that variety of mistakes, errors, and faults which we run into in the conduct of our lives, and our endeavours after happiness; whilst we precipitate the determination of our wills, and engage too soon before due examination. To prevent this, we have a power to suspend the prosecution of this or that desire, as every one daily may experiment in himself. This seems to me the source of all liberty; in this seems to consist that which is (as I think improperly) called ‘free-will.’ For during this suspension of any desire, before the will be determined to action, and the action (which follows that determination) done, we have opportunity to examine, view, and judge of the good or evil of what we are going to do; and when upon due examination we have judged, we have done our duty, all that we can or ought to do in pursuit of our happiness; and it is not a fault but a perfection of our nature to desire, will and act, according to the last result of a fair examination.

988 48. *To be determined by our own judgment, is no restraint to liberty.*—This is so far from being a restraint or diminution of freedom, that it is the very improvement and benefit of it; it is

not an abridgment, it is the end and use, of our liberty; and the farther we are removed from such a determination, the nearer we are to misery and slavery. A perfect indifference in the mind, not determinable by its last judgment of the good or evil that is thought to attend its choice, would be so far from being an advantage and excellency of an intellectual nature, that it would be as great an imperfection, as the want of indifference to act or not to act till determined by the will, would be an imperfection on the other side. A man is at liberty to lift up his hand to his head, or let it rest quiet: he is perfectly indifferent in either; and it would be an imperfection in him if he wanted that power, if he were deprived of that indifference. But it would be as great an imperfection, if he had the same indifference, whether he would prefer the lifting up his hand, or its remaining in rest, when it would save his head or eyes from a blow he sees coming: it is as much a perfection that desire, or the power of preferring, should be determined by good, as that the power of acting should be determined by the will; and the certainer such determination is, the greater is the perfection. Nay, were we determined by any thing but the last result of our own minds judging of the good or evil of any action, we were not free; the very end of our freedom being, that we may attain the good we choose. And therefore every man is put under a necessity by his constitution, as an intelligent being, to be determined in willing, by his own thought and judgment, what is best for him to do: else he would be under the determination of some other than himself, which is want of liberty. And to deny that a man's will, in every determination, follows his own judgment, is to say, that a man wills and acts for an end that he would not have, at the time that he wills and acts for it. For if he prefers it in his present thoughts before any other, it is plain he then thinks better of it, and would have it before any other, unless he can have and not have it, will and not will it, at the same time; a contradiction too manifest to be admitted.

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989 50. *A constant determination to a pursuit of happiness, no abridgment of liberty.*—But, to give a right view of this mistaken part of liberty, let me ask, Would any one be a changeling because he is less determined by wise considerations than a wise man?

Is it worth the name of freedom to be at liberty to play the fool, and draw shame and misery upon a man's self? If to break loose from the conduct of reason, and to want that restraint of examination and judgment which keeps us from choosing or doing the worse, be liberty, true liberty, madmen and fools are the only freemen: but yet, I think, nobody would choose to be mad for the sake of such liberty, but he that is mad already. The constant desire of happiness, and the constraint it puts upon us to act for it, nobody, I think, accounts an abridgment of liberty, or at least an abridgment of liberty to be complained of.

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- 990 51. *The necessity of pursuing true happiness, the foundation of all liberty.*—As therefore the highest perfection of intellectual nature lies in a careful and constant pursuit of true and solid happiness, so the care of ourselves, that we mistake not imaginary for real happiness, is the necessary foundation of our liberty. The stronger ties we have to an unalterable pursuit of happiness in general, which is our greatest good, and which, as such, our desires always follow, the more are we free from any necessary determination of our will, to any particular action, and from a necessary compliance with our desire set upon any particular and then appearing preferable good, till we have duly examined whether it has a tendency to or be inconsistent with our real happiness: and therefore till we are as much informed upon this inquiry as the weight of the matter and the nature of the case demands, we are, by the necessity of preferring and pursuing true happiness as our greatest good, obliged to suspend the satisfaction of our desire in particular cases.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.—OF OTHER RELATIONS.

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- 991 4. *Moral.*—There is another sort of relation, which is the conformity or disagreement men's voluntary actions have to a rule to which they are referred, and by which they are judged of; which, I think, may be called 'moral relation,' as being that which denominates our moral actions, and deserves well to be examined, there being no part of knowledge wherein we should

be more careful to get determined ideas, and avoid, as much as may be, obscurity and confusion. Human actions, when, with their various ends, objects, manners, and circumstances, they are framed into distinct complex ideas, are, as has been shown, so many mixed modes, a great part whereof have names affixed to them. Thus, supposing gratitude to be a readiness to acknowledge and return kindness received; polygamy to be the having more wives than one at once: when we frame these notions thus in our minds, we have there so many determined ideas of mixed modes. But this is not all that concerns our actions; it is not enough to have determined ideas of them, and to know what names belong to such and such combinations of ideas. We have a farther and greater concernment; and that is, to know whether such actions so made up are morally good or bad.

992 5. *Moral good and evil.*—Good and evil, as hath been shown (book ii. chap. xx. sect. 2, and chap. xxi. sect. 42), are nothing but pleasure or pain, or that which occasions or procures pleasure or pain to us. Moral good and evil, then, is only the conformity or disagreement of our voluntary actions to some law, whereby good and evil is drawn on us from the will and power of the law-maker; which good and evil, pleasure or pain, attending our observance or breach of the law, by the decree of the law-maker, is that we call ‘reward’ and ‘punishment.’

993 6. *Moral rules.*—Of these moral rules or laws, to which men generally refer, and by which they judge of the rectitude or pravity of their actions, there seem to me to be three sorts, with their three different enforcements, or rewards and punishments. For since it would be utterly in vain to suppose a rule set to the free actions of man, without annexing to it some enforcement of good and evil to determine his will, we must wherever we suppose a law, suppose also some reward or punishment annexed to that law. It would be in vain for one intelligent being to set a rule to the actions of another, if he had it not in his power to reward the compliance with, and punish deviation from, his rule, by some good and evil that is not the natural product and consequence of the action itself. For that, being a natural convenience or inconvenience, would operate of itself without a law. This, if I mistake not, is the true nature of all law, properly so called.

994 7. *Laws.*—The laws that men generally refer their actions to,

to judge of their rectitude or obliquity, seem to me to be these three: (1) The divine law. (2) The civil law. (3) The law of opinion or reputation, if I may so call it. By the relation they bear to the first of these, men judge whether their actions are sins or duties; by the second, whether they be criminal or innocent; and by the third, whether they be virtues or vices.

8. *Divine law, the measure of sin and duty.*—First, The divine law, whereby I mean the law which God has set to the actions of men, whether promulgated to them by the light of nature, or the voice of revelation. That God has given a rule whereby men should govern themselves, I think there is nobody so brutish as to deny. He has a right to do it; we are his creatures. He has goodness and wisdom to direct our actions to that which is best; and he has power to enforce it by rewards and punishments, of infinite weight and duration, in another life; for nobody can take us out of his hands. This is the only true touchstone of moral rectitude; and by comparing them to this law it is that men judge of the most considerable moral good or evil of their actions; that is, whether as duties or sins they are like to procure them happiness or misery from the hands of the Almighty.

995 9. *Civil law, the measure of crimes and innocence.*—Secondly, The civil law, the rule set by the commonwealth to the actions of those who belong to it, is another rule to which men refer their actions, to judge whether they be criminal or no. This law nobody overlooks; the rewards and punishments that enforce it being ready at hand, and suitable to the power that makes it; which is the force of the commonwealth, engaged to protect the lives, liberties, and possessions of those who live according to its laws, and has power to take away life, liberty, or goods from him who disobeys; which is the punishment of offences committed against this law.

996 10. *Philosophical law, the measure of virtue and vice.*—Thirdly, The law of opinion or reputation. ‘Virtue’ and ‘vice’ are names pretended and supposed every where to stand for actions in their own nature right or wrong: and as far as they really are so applied, they so far are coincident with the divine law above mentioned. But yet, whatever is pretended, this is visible, that these names, ‘virtue’ and ‘vice,’ in the particular instances of their

application, through the several nations and societies of men in the world, are constantly attributed only to such actions as in each country and society are in reputation or discredit. Nor is it to be thought strange, that men every where should give the name of ‘virtue’ to those actions which amongst them are judged praiseworthy; and call that ‘vice,’ which they account blameable: since otherwise they would condemn themselves, if they should think any thing right, to which they allowed not condemnation; any thing wrong, which they let pass without blame. Thus the measure of what is every where called and esteemed ‘virtue’ and ‘vice,’ is this approbation or dislike, praise or blame, which, by a secret and tacit consent establishes itself in the several societies, tribes, and clubs of men in the world, whereby several actions come to find credit or disgrace amongst them, according to the judgment, maxims, or fashions of that place. For though men uniting into politic societies have resigned up to the public the disposing of all their force, so that they cannot employ it against any fellow-citizen any farther than the law of the country directs; yet they retain still the power of thinking well or ill, approving or disapproving, of the actions of those whom they live amongst, and converse with; and by this approbation and dislike, they establish amongst themselves what they will call ‘virtue’ and ‘vice.’

997 11. That this is the common measure of virtue and vice, will appear to any one who considers, that though that passes for vice in one country which is counted a virtue, or at least not vice, in another; yet every where virtue and praise, vice and blame, go together. Virtue is every where that which is thought praiseworthy; and nothing else but that which has the allowance of public esteem is called ‘virtue.’

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For since nothing can be more natural than to encourage with esteem and reputation that wherein every one finds his advantage, and to blame and discountenance the contrary, it is no wonder that esteem and discredit, virtue and vice, should in a great measure every where correspond with the unchangeable rule of right and wrong which the law of God hath established: there being nothing that so directly and visibly secures and advances the general good of mankind in this world, as obedience to the

laws he has set them, and nothing that breeds such mischiefs and confusion as the neglect of them. And therefore men, without renouncing all sense and reason, and their own interest, which they are so constantly true to, could not generally mistake in placing their commendation and blame on that side that really deserved it not. Nay, even those men whose practice was otherwise, failed not to give their approbation right, few being depraved to that degree as not to condemn, at least in others, the faults they themselves were guilty of: whereby, even in the corruption of manners, the true boundaries of the law of nature, which ought to be the rule of virtue and vice, were pretty well preserved. So that even the exhortations of inspired teachers have not feared to appeal to common repute: ‘Whatsoever is lovely, whatsoever is of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise,’ &c. (Phil. iv. 8.)

998 12. *Its enforcements, commendation, and discredit.*—If any one shall imagine that I have forgot my own notion of a law, when I make the law whereby men judge of virtue and vice to be nothing else but the consent of private men who have not authority enough to make a law; especially wanting that which is so necessary and essential to a law, a power to enforce it: I think I may say, that he who imagines commendation and disgrace not to be strong motives on men to accommodate themselves to the opinions and rules of those with whom they converse, seems little skilled in the nature or history of mankind: the greatest part whereof he shall find to govern themselves chiefly, if not solely, by this law of fashion; and, so they do that which keeps them in reputation with their company, little regard the laws of God or the magistrate.

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999 13. *These three laws the rules of moral good and evil.*—These three, then, First, The law of God, Secondly, The law of politic societies, Thirdly, The law of fashion, or private censure—are those to which men variously compare their actions: and it is by their conformity to one of these laws that they take their measures, when they would judge of their moral rectitude, and denominate their actions good or bad.

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BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE

An Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue

[First printed in the second edition of the ‘Fable of the Bees, or private
vices, public benefits,’ &c., 1723.]

000 ALL untaught animals are only solicitous of pleasing themselves, and naturally follow the bent of their own inclinations, without considering the good or harm that from their being pleased will accrue to others. This is the reason that, in the wild state of nature, those creatures are fittest to live peaceably together in great numbers, that discover the least of understanding, and have the fewest appetites to gratify; and consequently no species of animals is, without the curb of government, less capable of agreeing long together in multitudes than that of man; yet such are his qualities, whether good or bad, I shall not determine, that no creature besides himself can ever be made sociable: but, being an extraordinary selfish and headstrong, as well as cunning animal, however he may be subdued by superior strength, it is impossible by force alone to make him tractable, and receive the improvements he is capable of.

001 The chief thing therefore, which lawgivers and other wise men, that have laboured for the establishment of society, have endeavoured, has been to make the people they were to govern believe, that it was more beneficial for every body to conquer than indulge

his appetites, and much better to mind the public than what seemed his private interest. As this has always been a very difficult task, so no wit or eloquence has been left untried to compass it; and the moralists and philosophers of all ages employed their utmost skill to prove the truth of so useful an assertion. But, whether mankind would have ever believed it or not, it is not likely that any body could have persuaded them to disapprove of their natural inclinations, or prefer the good of others to their own, if at the same time he had not shewed them an equivalent to be enjoyed as a reward for the violence which, by so doing, they of necessity must commit upon themselves. Those that have undertaken to civilize mankind were not ignorant of this; but being unable to give so many real rewards as would satisfy all persons for every individual action, they were forced to contrive an imaginary one, that, as a general equivalent for the trouble of self-denial, should serve on all occasions, and, without costing any thing either to themselves or others, be yet a most acceptable recompence to the receivers.

- 1002** They thoroughly examined all the strength and frailties of our nature, and observing that none were either so savage as not to be charmed with praise, or so despicable as patiently to bear contempt, justly concluded, that flattery must be the most powerful argument that could be used to human creatures. Making use of this bewitching engine, they extolled the excellency of our nature above other animals; and, setting forth with unbounded praises the wonders of our sagacity and vastness of understanding, bestowed a thousand encomiums on the rationality of our souls, by the help of which we were capable of performing the most noble achievements. Having by this artful way of flattery insinuated themselves into the hearts of men, they began to instruct them in the notions of honour and shame, representing the one as the worst of all evils, and the other as the highest good to which mortals could aspire; which being done, they laid before them how unbecoming it was the dignity of such sublime creatures to be solicitous about gratifying those appetites which they had in common with brutes, and at the same time unmindful of those higher qualities that gave them the pre-eminence over all visible beings. They indeed confessed, that those impulses of nature were very pressing; that it was troublesome to resist, and very difficult wholly to subdue them. But this

they only used as an argument to demonstrate, how glorious the conquest of them was on the one hand, and how scandalous on the other not to attempt it.

1003 To introduce moreover an emulation amongst men, they divided the whole species in two classes, vastly differing from one another. The one consisted of abject, low-minded people, that always hunting after immediate enjoyment, were wholly incapable of self-denial, and, without regard to the good of others, had no higher aim than their private advantage, such as, being enslaved by voluptuousness, yielded without resistance to every gross desire, and made no use of their rational faculties but to heighten their sensual pleasures: these vile grovelling wretches, they said, were the dross of their kind, and, having only the shape of men, differed from brutes in nothing but their outward figure. But the other class was made up of lofty high-spirited creatures, that, free from sordid selfishness, esteemed the improvements of the mind to be their fairest possessions; and, setting a true value upon themselves, took no delight but in embellishing that part in which their excellency consisted, such as, despising whatever they had in common with irrational creatures, opposed by the help of reason their most violent inclinations, and making a continual war with themselves, to promote the peace of others, aimed at no less than the public welfare, and the conquest of their own passions.

*Fortior est qui se, quam qui fortissima, vincit
Moenia . . .*

These they called the true representatives of their sublime species, exceeding in worth the first class by more degrees, than that itself was superior to the beasts of the field.

1004 As in all animals that are not too imperfect to discover pride, we find that the finest, and such as are the most beautiful and valuable of their kind, have generally the greatest share of it; so in man, the most perfect of animals, it is so inseparable from his very essence, (how cunningly soever some may learn to hide or disguise it,) that without it the compound he is made of would want one of the chiefest ingredients; which, if we consider, it is hardly to be doubted but lessons and remonstrances, so skilfully adapted to the good opinion man has of himself, as those I have mentioned, must,

if scattered amongst a multitude, not only gain the assent of most of them as to the speculative part, but likewise induce several, especially the fiercest, most resolute, and best among them, to endure a thousand inconveniences, and undergo as many hardships, that they may have the pleasure of counting themselves men of the second class, and consequently appropriating to themselves all the excellencies they have heard of it.

1005 From what has been said we ought to expect, in the first place, that the heroes, who took such extraordinary pains to master some of their natural appetites, and preferred the good of others to any visible interest of their own, would not recede an inch from the fine notions they had received concerning the dignity of rational creatures ; and, having ever the authority of the government on their side, with all imaginable vigour assert the esteem that was due to those of the second class, as well as their superiority over the rest of their kind. In the second, that those, who want a sufficient stock of either pride or resolution to buoy them up in mortifying of what was dearest to them, followed the sensual dictates of nature, would yet be ashamed of confessing themselves to be of those despicable wretches that belonged to the inferior class and were generally reckoned to be so little removed from brutes ; and that therefore in their own defence they would say as others did, and, hiding their own imperfections as well as they could, cry up self-denial and public-spiritedness as much as any ; for it is highly probable, that some of them, convinced by the real proofs of fortitude and self-conquest they had seen, would admire in others what they found wanting in themselves, others be afraid of the resolution and prowess of those of the second class, and that all of them were kept in awe by the power of their rulers ; wherefore it is reasonable to think, that none of them (whatever they thought in themselves,) would dare openly contradict what by every body else was thought criminal to doubt of.

1006 This was (or at least might have been) the manner after which savage man was broke ; from whence it is evident, that the first rudiments of morality, broached by skilful politicians, to render men useful to each other as well as tractable, were chiefly contrived, that the ambitious might reap the more benefit from, and govern vast numbers of them with the greatest ease and security. This foundation of politics being once laid, it is impossible that

man should long remain uncivilized; for even those, who only strove to gratify their appetites, being continually crossed by others of the same stamp, could not but observe, that whenever they checked their inclinations, or but followed them with more circumspection, they avoided a world of troubles, and often escaped many of the calamities that generally attended the too eager pursuit after pleasure.

First, they received, as well as others, the benefit of those actions that were done for the good of the whole society, and consequently could not forbear wishing well to those of the superior class that performed them. Secondly, the more intent they were in seeking their own advantage without regard to others, the more they were hourly convinced, that none stood so much in their way as those that were most like themselves.

007 It being the interest then of the very worst of them, more than any, to preach up public-spiritedness, that they might reap the fruits of the labour and self-denial of others, and at the same time indulge their own appetites with less disturbance, they agreed with the rest to call every thing which, without regard to the public, man should commit to gratify any of his appetites, VICE, if in that action there could be observed the least prospect, that it might either be injurious to any of the society, or even render himself less serviceable to others, and to give the name of VIRTUE to every performance, by which man, contrary to the impulse of nature, should endeavour the benefit of others, or the conquest of his own passions, out of a rational ambition of being good.

008 It shall be objected, that no society was ever any ways civilized, before the major part had agreed upon some worship or other of an over-ruling power, and consequently that the notions of good and evil, and the distinction between virtue and vice, were never the contrivance of politicians, but the pure effect of religion. Before I answer this objection, I must repeat what I have said already, that in this *Enquiry into the origin of moral virtue*, I speak neither of Jews nor Christians, but man in his state of nature and ignorance of the true Deity; and then I affirm, that the idolatrous superstitions of all other nations, and the pitiful notions they had of the Supreme Being, were incapable of exciting man to virtue, and good for nothing but to awe and amuse a rude and unthinking

multitude. It is evident from history, that in all considerable societies, how stupid or ridiculous soever people's received notions have been as to the deities they worshipped, human nature has ever exerted itself in all its branches, and that there is no earthly wisdom or moral virtue, but at one time or other men have excelled in it in all monarchies and commonwealths, that for riches and power have been any ways remarkable.

The Aegyptians, not satisfied with having deified all the ugly monsters they could think on, were so silly as to adore the onions of their own sowing ; yet at the same time their country was the most famous nursery of arts and sciences in the world, and themselves more eminently skilled in the deepest mysteries of nature than any nation has been since.

No states or kingdoms under heaven have yielded more or greater patterns in all sorts of moral virtues than the Greek and Roman empires, more especially the latter ; and yet how loose, absurd, and ridiculous were their sentiments as to sacred matters ? for without reflecting on the extravagant number of their deities, if we only consider the infamous stories they fathered upon them, it is not to be denied but that their religion, far from teaching men the conquest of their passions, and the way to virtue, seemed rather contrived to justify their appetites, and encourage their vices. But, if we would know what made them excel in fortitude, courage, and magnanimity, we must cast our eyes on the pomp of their triumphs, the magnificence of their monuments and arches, their trophies, statues, and inscriptions, the variety of their military crowns, their honours decreed to the dead, public encomiums on the living, and other imaginary rewards they bestowed on men of merit : and we shall find, that what carried so many of them to the utmost pitch of self-denial, was nothing but their policy in making use of the most effectual means that human pride could be flattered with.

09 It is visible then, that it was not any heathen religion or other idolatrous superstition, that first put man upon crossing his appetites and subduing his dearest inclinations, but the skilful management of wary politicians ; and the nearer we search into human nature, the more we shall be convinced, that the moral virtues are the political offspring which flattery begot upon pride.

1010 There is no man of what capacity or penetration soever, that is wholly proof against the witchcraft of flattery, if artfully performed, and suited to his abilities. Children and fools will swallow personal praise, but those that are more cunning must be managed with greater circumspection; and the more general the flattery is, the less it is suspected by those it is levelled at. What you say in commendation of a whole town is received with pleasure by all the inhabitants: speak in commendation of letters in general, and every man of learning will think himself in particular obliged to you. You may safely praise the employment a man is of, or the country he was born in, because you give him an opportunity of screening the joy he feels upon his own account, under the esteem which he pretends to have for others.

It is common among cunning men, that understand the power which flattery has upon pride, when they are afraid they shall be imposed upon, to enlarge, though much against their conscience, upon the honour, fair dealing, and integrity of the family, country, or sometimes the profession of him they suspect, because they know that men often will change their resolution, and act against their inclination, that they may have the pleasure of continuing to appear, in the opinion of some, what they are conscious not to be in reality. Thus sagacious moralists draw men like angels, in hopes that the pride at least of some will put them upon copying after the beautiful originals which they are represented to be.

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1011 But here I shall be told, that, besides the noisy toils of war and public bustle of the ambitious, there are noble and generous actions that are performed in silence; that virtue being its own reward, those who are really good have a satisfaction in their consciousness of being so, which is all the recompense they expect from the most worthy performances; that among the heathens there have been men, who, when they did good to others, were so far from coveting thanks and applause, that they took all imaginable care to be for ever concealed from those on whom they bestowed their benefit, and consequently that pride has no hand in spurring man on to the highest pitch of self-denial.

In answer to this I say, that it is impossible to judge of a man's performance, unless we are thoroughly acquainted with the principle

and motive from which he acts. Pity, though it is the most gentle and the least mischievous of all our passions, is yet as much a frailty of our nature, as anger, pride, or fear. The weakest minds have generally the greatest share of it, for which reason none are more compassionate than women and children. It must be owned, that of all our weaknesses it is the most amiable, and bears the greatest resemblance to virtue ; nay, without a considerable mixture of it, the society could hardly subsist ; but, as it is an impulse of nature, that consults neither the public interest nor our own reason, it may produce evil as well as good. It has helped to destroy the honour of virgins, and corrupted the integrity of judges ; and whoever acts from it as a principle, what good soever he may bring to the society, has nothing to boast of but that he has indulged a passion that has happened to be beneficial to the public. There is no merit in saving an innocent babe ready to drop into the fire ; the action is neither good nor bad, and what benefit soever the infant received, we only obliged our selves ; for to have seen it fall, and not strove to hinder it, would have caused a pain, which self-preservation compelled us to prevent : nor has a rich prodigal, that happens to be of a commiserating temper, and loves to gratify his passions, greater virtue to boast of, when he relieves an object of compassion with what to himself is a trifle.

1012 But such men, as without complying with any weakness of their own, can part from what they value themselves, and, from no other motive but their love to goodness, perform a worthy action in silence ; such men, I confess, have acquired more refined notions of virtue than those I have hitherto spoke of ; yet even in these (with which the world has yet never swarm'd) we may discover no small symptoms of pride, and the humblest man alive must confess, that the reward of a virtuous action, which is the satisfaction that ensues upon it, consists in a certain pleasure he procures to himself by contemplating on his own worth : which pleasure, together with the occasion of it, are as certain signs of pride, as looking pale and trembling at any imminent danger are the symptoms of fear.

If the too scrupulous reader should at first view condemn these notions concerning the origin of moral virtue, and think them perhaps offensive to Christianity, I hope he'll forbear his censures, when he shall consider, that nothing can render the unsearchable

depth of the divine wisdom more conspicuous, than that man, whom providence had designed for society, should not only by his own frailties and imperfections be led into the road to temporal happiness, but likewise receive from a seeming necessity of natural causes, a tincture of that knowledge in which he was afterwards to be made perfect by the true religion, to his eternal welfare.

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WILLIAM PALEY

The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy

[First edition, 1785.]



BOOK I.

CHAPTER VII.

1013 VIRTUE is, ‘the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness.’

According to which definition, ‘the good of mankind’ is the subject, the ‘will of God’ the rule, and ‘everlasting happiness’ the motive of human virtue.

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BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

1014 WHY am I obliged to keep my word? Because it is right, says one.—Because it is agreeable to the fitness of things, says another.—Because it is conformable to reason and nature, says a third.—Because it is conformable to truth, says a fourth.—Because it promotes the public good, says a fifth.—Because it is required by the will of God, concludes a sixth.

Upon which different accounts, two things are observable:

1015 FIRST, that they all ultimately coincide.

The fitness of things means their fitness to produce happiness:

the nature of things means that actual constitution of the world, by which some things, as such and such actions, for example, produce happiness, and others misery: reason is the principle, by which we discover or judge of this constitution: truth is this judgment expressed or drawn out into propositions. So that it necessarily comes to pass, that what promotes the public happiness, or happiness upon the whole, is agreeable to the fitness of things, to nature, to reason, and to truth; and such (as will appear by and by) is the divine character, that what promotes the general happiness is required by the will of God; and what has all the above properties must needs be right: for right means no more than conformity to the rule we go by, whatever that rule be. And this is the reason that moralists, from whatever different principles they set out, commonly meet in their conclusions; that is, they enjoin the same conduct, prescribe the same rules of duty, and, with a few exceptions, deliver upon dubious cases the same determinations.

1016 **SECONDLY**, it is to be observed, that these answers all leave the matter short; for the enquirer may turn round upon his teacher with a second question, in which he will expect to be satisfied, namely, why am I obliged to do what is right; to act agreeably to the fitness of things; to conform to reason, nature, or truth; to promote the public good, or to obey the will of God?

The proper method of conducting the enquiry is, **FIRST**, to examine what we mean, when we say a man is obliged to do any thing, and **THEN** to shew why he is obliged to do the thing which we have proposed as an example, namely, ‘to keep his word.’

CHAPTER II.

1017 A MAN is said to be obliged, ‘when he is urged by a violent motive resulting from the command of another.’

I. ‘The motive must be violent.’ If a person, who has done me some little service, or has a small place in his disposal, ask me for my vote upon some occasion, I may possibly give it him, from a motive of gratitude or expectation; but I should hardly say, that I was obliged to give it him, because the inducement does not rise high enough. Whereas, if a father or a master, any great benefactor, or one on whom my fortune depends, require my vote, I give

it him of course; and my answer to all who ask me why I voted so and so, is, that my father or my master obliged me; that I had received so many favours from, or had so great a dependence upon such a one, that I was obliged to vote as he directed me.

1018 **SECONDLY,** ‘It must result from the command of another.’ Offer a man a gratuity for doing any thing, for seizing, for example, an offender, he is not obliged by your offer to do it; nor would he say he is; though he may be induced, persuaded, prevailed upon, tempted. If a magistrate, or the man’s immediate superior command it, he considers himself as obliged to comply, though possibly he would lose less by a refusal in this case, than in the former. I will not undertake to say that the words obligation and obliged are used uniformly in this sense, or always with this distinction; nor is it possible to tie down popular phrases to any constant significance: but, wherever the motive is violent enough, and coupled with the idea of command, authority, law, or the will of a superior, there, I take it, we always reckon ourselves to be obliged.

1019 And from this account of obligation it follows, that we can be obliged to nothing, but what we ourselves are to gain or lose something by; for nothing else can be a ‘violent motive’ to us. As we should not be obliged to obey the laws, or the magistrate, unless rewards or punishments, pleasure or pain, some how or other depended upon our obedience; so neither should we, without the same reason, be obliged to do what is right, to practise virtue, or to obey the commands of God.

CHAPTER III.

1020 **LET** it be remembered, that to be obliged, ‘is to be urged by a violent motive, resulting from the command of another.’ And then let it be asked, Why am I obliged to keep my word? and the answer will be, because I am ‘urged to do so by a violent motive,’ (namely, the expectation of being after this life rewarded, if I do, or punished for it, if I do not) ‘resulting from the command of another,’ (namely, of God). This solution goes to the bottom of the subject, as no farther question can reasonably be asked.

Therefore, private happiness is our motive, and the will of God our rule.

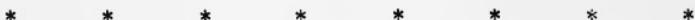
1021 When I first turned my thoughts to moral speculations, an air of

mystery seemed to hang over the whole subject ; which arose, I believe, from hence—that I supposed, with many authors whom I had read, that to be obliged to do a thing, was very different from being induced only to do it ; and that the obligation to practise virtue, to do what is right, just, &c. was quite another thing, and of another kind, than the obligation which a soldier is under to obey his officer, a servant his master, or any of the civil and ordinary obligations of human life. Whereas, from what has been said it appears, that moral obligation is like all other obligations ; and that all obligation is nothing more than an inducement of sufficient strength, and resulting, in some way, from the command of another.

1022 There is always understood to be a difference between an act of prudence and an act of duty. Thus, if I distrusted a man who owed me money, I should reckon it an act of prudence to get another bound with him ; but I should hardly call it an act of duty. On the other hand, it would be thought a very unusual and loose kind of language, to say, that, as I had made such a promise, it was prudent to perform it ; or that as my friend, when he went abroad, placed a box of jewels in my hands, it would be prudent in me to preserve it for him 'till he returned.

Now, in what, you will ask, does the difference consist ? Inasmuch, as according to our account of the matter, both in the one case and the other, in acts of duty as well as acts of prudence, we consider solely what we shall gain or lose by the act ? The difference, and the only difference, is this ; that, in the one case we consider what we shall gain or lose in the present world ; in the other case, we consider also what we shall gain or lose in the world to come.

Those who would establish a system of morality, independent of a future state, must look out for some different idea of moral obligation ; unless they can shew that virtue conducts the possessor to certain happiness in this life, or to a much greater share of it, than he could attain by a different behaviour.



WILLIAM WOLLASTON

The Religion of Nature delineated

[Privately printed, 1722. First published, 1724. Reprinted here from the eighth edition, 1759.]

SECTION I. OF MORAL GOOD AND EVIL.

1023 THE foundation of religion lies in that difference between the acts of men, which distinguishes them into good, evil, indifferent. For if there is such a difference, there must be religion ; & contra. Upon this account it is that such a long and laborious inquiry hath been made after some general idea, or some rule, by comparing the foresaid acts with which it might appear, to which kind they respectively belong. And tho' men have not yet agreed upon any one, yet one certainly there must be. That, which I am going to propose, has always seemed to me not only evidently true, but withal so obvious and plain, that perhaps for this very reason it hath not merited the notice of authors : and the use and application of it is so easy, that if things are but fairly permitted to speak for themselves their own natural language, they will, with a moderate attention, be found themselves to proclaim their own rectitude or obliquity ; that is, whether they are disagreeable to it, or not. I shall endeavour by degrees to explain my meaning.

1024 I. That act, which may be denominated morally good or evil, must be the act of a being capable of distinguishing, choosing, and acting for himself : or more briefly, of an intelligent and free agent. Because in proper speaking no act at all can be ascribed to that, which is not indued with these capacities. For that, which cannot distinguish, cannot choose : and that, which has not the opportunity, or liberty of choosing for itself, and acting accordingly, from an

internal principle, acts, if it acts at all, under a necessity incumbent *ab extra*. But that, which acts thus, is in reality only an instrument in the hand of something which imposes the necessity ; and cannot properly be said to act, but to be acted on. The act must be the act of an agent : therefore not of his instrument.

A being under the above-mentioned inabilities is, as to the morality of its acts, in the state of inert and passive matter, and can be but a machine : to which no language or philosophy ever ascribed *μόρη* or *mores*.

1025 II. Those propositions are true, which express things as they are : or, truth is the conformity of those words or signs, by which things are express'd, to the things themselves. Defin.

1026 III. A true proposition may be denied, or things may be denied to be what they are, by deeds, as well as by express words or another proposition. It is certain there is a meaning in many acts and gestures. Every body understands weeping, laughing, shrugs, frowns, &c., these are a sort of universal language.

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But these instances do not come up to my meaning. There are many acts of other kinds, such as constitute the character of a man's conduct in life, which have in nature, and would be taken by any indifferent judge to have a signification, and to imply some proposition, as plainly to be understood as if it was declared in words : and therefore if what such acts declare to be, is not, they must contradict truth, as much as any false proposition or assertion can.

If a body of soldiers, seeing another body approach, should fire upon them, would not this action declare that they were enemies ; and if they were not enemies, would not this military language declare what was false ? No, perhaps it may be said ; this can only be called a mistake, like that which happened to the Athenians in the attack of Epipolae, or to the Carthaginians in their last incampment against Agathocles in Africa. Suppose then, instead of this firing, some officer to have said they were enemies, when indeed they were friends : would not that sentence affirming them to be enemies be false, notwithstanding he who spoke it was mistaken ? The truth or falsehood of this affirmation doth not depend upon the affirmer's knowledge or ignorance : because there is a certain sense affixt to the words, which must either agree or

disagree to that, concerning which the affirmation is made. The thing is the very same still, if into the place of words be substituted actions. The salute here was in nature the salute of an enemy, but should have been the salute of a friend: therefore it implied a falsity. Any spectator would have understood this action as I do; for a declaration, that the other were enemies. Now what is to be understood, has a meaning: and what has a meaning, may be either true or false: which is as much as can be said of any verbal sentence.

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1027 If A should enter into a compact with B, by which he promises and ingages never to do some certain thing, and after this he does that thing: in this case it must be granted, that his act interferes with his promise, and is contrary to it. Now it cannot interfere with his promise, but it must also interfere with the truth of that proposition, which says there was such a promise made, or that there is such a compact subsisting. If this proposition be true, A made such a certain agreement with B, it would be denied by this, A never made any agreement with B. Why? Because the truth of this latter is inconsistent with the agreement asserted in the former. The formality of the denial, or that, which makes it to be a denial, is this inconsistence. If then the behaviour of A be inconsistent with the agreement mentioned in the former proposition, that proposition is as much denied by A's behaviour, as it can be by the latter, or any other proposition. Or thus, If one proposition imports or contains that which is contrary to what is contained in another, it is said to contradict this other, and denies the existence of what is containd in it. Just so if one act imports that which is contrary to the import of another, it contradicts this other, and denies its existence. In a word, if A by his actions denies the engagements, to which he hath subjected himself, his actions deny them; just as we say, Ptolemy by his writings denies the motion of the earth, or his writings deny it.

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1028 When a man lives, as if he had the estate which he has not, or was in other regards (all fairly cast up) what he is not, what judgment is to be passed upon him? Doth not his whole conduct breathe untruth? May we not say (if the propriety of language permits), that he lives a lye?

In common speech we say some actions are insignificant, which would not be sense, if there were not some that are significant, that have a tendency and meaning. And this is as much as can be said of articulate sounds, that they are either significant or insignificant.

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I lay this down then as a fundamental maxim, That whoever acts as if things were so, or not so, doth by his acts declare, that they are so, or not so; as plainly as he could by words, and with more reality. And if the things are otherwise, his acts contradict those propositions, which assert them to be as they are.

1029 IV. No act (whether word or deed) of any being, to whom moral good and evil are imputable, that interferes with any true proposition, or denies any thing to be as it is, can be right. For,

1. If that proposition, which is false, be wrong, that act which implies such a proposition, or is founded in it, cannot be right: because it is the very proposition itself in practice.

1030 2. Those propositions, which are true, and express things as they are, express the relation between the subject and the attribute as it is; that is, this is either affirmed or denied of that according to the nature of that relation. And further, this relation (or, if you will, the nature of this relation) is determin'd and fixt by the natures of the things themselves. Therefore nothing can interfere with any proposition that is true, but it must likewise interfere with nature (the nature of the relation, and the natures of the things themselves too), and consequently be unnatural, or wrong in nature. So very much are those gentlemen mistaken, who by following nature mean only complying with their bodily inclinations, tho in opposition to truth, or at least without any regard to it. Truth is but a conformity to nature: and to follow nature cannot be to combat truth.

1031 3. If there is a supreme being, upon whom the existence of the world depends; and nothing can be in it but what He either causes, or permits to be; then to own things to be as they are is to own what He causes, or at least permits, to be thus caused or permitted: and this is to take things as He gives them, to go into His constitution of the world, and to submit to His will, revealed in the books of nature. To do this therefore must be agreeable to His will. And if so, the contrary must be disagreeable to it; and, since

(as we shall find in due time) there is a perfect rectitude in His will, certainly wrong.

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1032 As the owning of things, in all our conduct, to be as they are, is direct obedience: so the contrary, not to own things to be or to have been that are or have been, or not to be what they are, is direct rebellion against Him, who is the Author of nature. For it is as much as to say, ‘God indeed causes such a thing to be, or at least permits it, and it is; or the relation, that lies between this and that, is of such a nature, that one may be affirmed of the other, &c. this is true: but yet to me it shall not be so: I will not indure it, or act as if it were so: the laws of nature are ill framed, nor will I mind them, or what follows from them: even existence shall be non-existence, when my pleasures require.’ Such an impious declaration as this attends every voluntary infraction of truth.

1033 4. Things cannot be denied to be what they are, in any instance or manner whatsoever, without contradicting axioms and truths eternal. For such are these: every thing is what it is; that which is done, cannot be undone; and the like. And then if those truths be considered as having always subsisted in the Divine mind, to which they have always been true, and which differs not from the Deity himself, to do this is to act not only in opposition to His government or sovereignty, but to His nature also: which, if He be perfect, and there be nothing in Him but what is most right, must also upon this account be most wrong.

Pardon these inadequate ways of speaking of God. You will apprehend my meaning: which perhaps may be better represented thus. If there are such things as axioms, which are and always have been immutably true, and consequently have been always known to God to be so, the truth of them cannot be denied any way, either directly or indirectly, but the truth of the Divine knowledge must be denied too.

1034 5. Designedly to treat things as being what they are not is the greatest possible absurdity. It is to put bitter for sweet, darkness for light, crooked for streight, &c. It is to subvert all science, to renounce all sense of truth, and flatly to deny the existence of any thing. For nothing can be true, nothing does exist, if things are not what they are.

To talk to a post, or otherwise treat it as if it was a man, would surely be reckoned an absurdity, if not distraction. Why? because this is to treat it as being what it is not. And why should not the converse be reckoned as bad; that is, to treat a man as a post; as if he had no sense, and felt not injuries, which he doth feel; as if to him pain and sorrow were not pain; happiness not happiness. This is what the cruel and unjust often do.

Lastly, To deny things to be as they are is a transgression of the great law of our nature, the law of reason. For truth cannot be opposed, but reason must be violated. But of this more in the proper place.

Much might be added here concerning the amiable nature, and great force of truth. If I may judge by what I feel within myself, the least truth cannot be contradicted without much reluctance: even to see other men disregard it does something more than displease; it is shocking.

1035 V. What has been said of acts inconsistent with truth, may also be said of many omissions, or neglects to act: that is, by these also true propositions may be denied to be true; and then those omissions, by which this is done, must be wrong for the same reasons with those assigned under the former proposition.

Nothing can be asserted or denied by any act with regard to those things, to which it bears no relation: and here no truth can be affected. And when acts do bear such relations to other things, as to be declaratory of something concerning them, this commonly is visible; and it is not difficult to determine, whether truth suffers by them, or not. Some things cannot possibly be done, but truth must be directly and positively denied; and the thing will be clear. But the cases arising from omissions are not always so well determined, and plain: it is not always easy to know when or how far truth is violated by omitting. Here therefore more latitude must be allowed, and much must be left to every one's own judgment and ingenuity.

This may be said in general, that when any truth would be denied by acting, the omitting to act can deny no truth. For no truth can be contrary to truth. And there may be omissions in other cases, that are silent as to truth. But yet there are some neglects or refusals to act, which are manifestly inconsistent with it (or, with some true propositions).

We before supposed A to have engaged not to do some certain thing, &c. if now, on the other side, he should by some solemn promise, oath, or other act undertake to do some certain thing before such a time, and he voluntarily omits to do it, he would behave himself as if there had been no such promise or engagement; which is equal to denying there was any: and truth is as much contradicted in this as in the former instance.

1036 Again, there are some ends, which the nature of things and truth require us to aim at, and at which therefore if we do not aim, nature and truth are denied. If a man does not desire to prevent evils, and to be happy, he denies both his own nature and the nature and definition of happiness to be what they are. And then further, willingly to neglect the means, leading to any such end, is the same as not to propose that end, and must fall under the same censure. As retreating from any end commonly attends the not advancing towards it, and that may be considered as an act, many omissions of this kind may be turned over to the other side, and brought under the foregoing proposition.

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1037 There are omissions of other kinds, which will deserve to be annumerated to these by being either total, or notorious, or upon the score of some other circumstance. It is certain I should not deny the *Phœnissæ* of Euripides to be an excellent drama by not reading it: nor do I deny Chihil-menâr to be a rare piece of antiquity by not going to see it. But should I, having leisure, health, and proper opportunities, read nothing, nor make any inquiries in order to improve my mind, and attain such knowledge as may be useful to me, I should then deny my mind to be what it is, and that knowledge to be what it is.

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If I give nothing to this or that poor body, to whom I am under no particular obligation, I do not by this deny them to be poor, any more than I should deny a man to have a squalid beard by not shaving him, to be nasty by not washing him, or to be lame by not taking him on my back.

Many things are here to be taken into consideration (according to the next proposition): perhaps I might intrench upon truth by doing this; and then I cannot by not doing it. But if I, being of ability to afford now and then something in charity to the poor,

should yet never give them any thing at all, I should then certainly deny the condition of the poor to be what it is, and my own to be what it is: and thus truth would be injured. So, again,

If I should not say my prayers at such a certain hour, or in such a certain place and manner, this would not imply a denial of the existence of God, His providence, or my dependence upon Him: nay, there may be reasons perhaps against that particular time, place, manner. But if I should never pray to Him, or worship Him at all, such a total omission would be equivalent to this assertion, There is no God, who governs the world, to be adored: which, if there is such a being, must be contrary to truth.

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Should I, in the last place, find a man grievously hurt by some accident, fain down, alone, and without present help like to perish; or see his house on fire, no body being near to help, or call out: in this extremity if I do not give him my assistance immediately, I do not do it at all: and by this refusing to do it according to my ability, I deny his case to be what it is; human nature to be what it is; and even those desires and expectations, which I am conscious to myself I should have under the like misfortune, to be what they are.

1038 VI. In order to judge rightly what any thing is, it must be considered not only what it is in itself or in one respect, but also what it may be in any other respect, which is capable of being denied by facts or practice: and the whole description of the thing ought to be taken in.

If a man steals a horse, and rides away upon him, he may be said indeed by riding him to use him as a horse, but not as the horse of another man, who gave him no licence to do this. He does not therefore consider him as being what he is, unless he takes in the respect he bears to his true owner. But it is not necessary perhaps to consider what he is in respect to his color, shape or age: because the thief's riding away with him may neither affirm nor deny him to be of any particular color, &c. I say therefore, that those, and all those properties, respects, and circumstances, which may be contradicted by practice, are to be taken into consideration. For otherwise the thing to be considered is but imperfectly surveyd;

and the whole compass of it being not taken in, it is taken not as being what it is, but as what it is in part only, and in other respects perhaps as being what it is not.

If a rich man being upon a journey, should be robbed and stript, it would be a second robbery and injustice committed upon him to take from him part of his then character, and to consider him only as a rich man. His character completed is a rich man robbed and abused, and indeed at that time a poor man and distrest, tho' able to repay afterwards the assistance lent him.

Moreover a man in giving assistance of any kind to another should consider what his own circumstances are, as well as what the other's are. If they do not permit him to give it, he does not by his forbearance deny the other to want it : but if he should give it, and by that deny his own or his family's circumstances to be what they are, he would actually contradict truth. And since (as I have observed already) all truths are consistent, nor can any thing be true any further than it is compatible with other things that are true ; when both parties are placed in a right light, and the case properly stated for a judgment, the latter may indeed be truly said to want assistance, but not the assistance of the former : any more than a man, who wants a guide, may be said to want a blind or a lame guide. By putting things thus may be truly known what the latter is with respect to the former.

1039 The case becomes more difficult, when a man (A) is under some promise or compact to assist another (B), and at the same time bound to consult his own happiness, provide for his family, &c. and he cannot do these, if he does that, effectually. For what must A do ? Here are not indeed opposite truths, but there are truths on opposite sides. I answer: tho' there cannot be two incompatible duties, or tho' two inconsistent acts cannot be both A's duty at the same time (for then his duty would be an impossibility); yet an obligation, which I will call mixt, may arise out of those differing considerations. A should assist B ; but so, as not to neglect himself and family, &c. and so to take care of himself and family, as not to forget the other engagement, as well and honestly as he can. Here the importance of the truths on the one and the other side should be diligently compared : and there must in such cases be always some exception or limitation understood. It is not in man's power to promise absolutely. He can only promise as one, who

may be disabled by the weight and incumbency of truths not then existing.

I could here insert many instances of partial thinking, which occur in authors : but I shall choose only to set down one in the margin.

In short, when things are truly estimated, persons concerned, times, places, ends intended, and effects that naturally follow, must be added to them.

1040 VII. When any act would be wrong, the forbearing that act must be right : likewise when the omission of any thing would be wrong, the doing of it (i. e. not omitting it) must be right. Because *contraria contraria est ratio*.

1041 VIII. Moral good and evil are coincident with right and wrong. For that cannot be good, which is wrong ; nor that evil, which is right.

1042 IX. Every act therefore of such a being, as is before described, and all those omissions which interfere with truth (i. e. deny any proposition to be true ; which is true ; or suppose any thing not to be what it is, in any regard) are morally evil, in some degree or other : the forbearing such acts, and the acting in opposition to such omissions are morally good : and when any thing may be either done, or not done, equally without the violation of truth, that thing is indifferent.

I would have it to be minded well, that when I speak of acts inconsistent with truth, I mean any truth ; any true proposition whatsoever, whether containing matter of speculation, or plain fact. I would have every thing taken to be what in fact and truth it is.

1043 It may be of use also to remember, that I have added those words in some degree or other. For neither all evil, nor all good actions are equal. Those truths which they respect, tho they are equally true, may comprise matters of very different importance ; or more truths may be violated one way than another : and then the crimes committed by the violation of them may be equally (one as well as the other) said to be crimes, but not equal crimes. If A steals a book from B which was pleasing and useful to him, it is true A is guilty of a crime in not treating the book as being what it is, the book of B, who is the proprietor of it, and one whose happiness partly depends upon it : but still if A should deprive B of

a good estate, of which he was the true owner, he would be guilty of a much greater crime. For if we suppose the book to be worth to him one pound, and the estate 1000*l.*, that truth, which is violated by depriving B of his book, is in effect violated 10000 times by robbing him of his estate. It is the same as to repeat the theft of one pound 10000 times over: and therefore if 10000 thefts (or crimes) are more, and all together greater than one, one equal to 10000 must be greater too: greater than that, which is but the 10000th part of it, sure. Then, tho the convenience and innocent pleasure, that B found in the use of the book, was a degree of happiness: yet the happiness accruing to him from the estate, by which he was supplied not only with necessaries, but also with many other comforts and harmless enjoyments, vastly exceeded it. And therefore the truth violated in the former case was, B had a property in that, which gave him such a degree of happiness: that violated in the latter, B had a property in that, which gave him a happiness vastly superior to the other. The violation therefore in the latter case is upon this account a vastly greater violation than in the former. Lastly, the truths violated in the former case might end in B, those in the latter may perhaps be repeated in them of his family, who subsist also by the estate, and are to be provided for out of it. And these truths are very many in respect of every one of them, and all their descendants. Thus the degrees of evil or guilt are as the importance and number of truths violated. I shall only add, on the other side, that the value of good actions will rise at least in proportion to the degrees of evil in the omission of them: and that therefore they cannot be equal, any more than the opposite evil omissions.

1044 But let us return to that, which is our main subject, the distinction between moral good and evil. Some have been so wild as to deny there is any such thing: but from what has been said here, it is manifest, that there is as certainly moral good and evil as there is true and false; and that there is as natural and immutable a difference between those as between these, the difference at the bottom being indeed the same. Others acknowledge, that there is indeed moral good and evil; but they want some criterion, or mark, by the help of which they might know them asunder. And others there are, who pretend to have found that rule, by which our actions ought to be squared, and may be discriminated; or that ultimate

end, to which they ought all to be referred: but what they have advanced is either false, or not sufficiently guarded, or not comprehensive enough, or not clear and firm, or (so far as it is just) reducible to my rule. For

1045 They, who reckon nothing to be good but what they call *honestum*, may denominate actions according as that is, or is not the cause or end of them: but then what is *honestum*? Something is still wanting to measure things by, and to separate the *honestia* from the *inhonestia*.

1046 They who place all in following nature, if they mean by that phrase acting according to the natures of things (that is, treating things as being what they in nature are, or according to truth) say what is right. But this does not seem to be their meaning. And if it is only that a man must follow his own nature, since his nature is not purely rational, but there is a part of him, which he has in common with brutes, they appoint him a guide which I fear will mislead him, this being commonly more likely to prevail, than the rational part. At best this talk is loose.

1047 They who make right reason to be the law, by which our acts are to be judged, and according to their conformity to this or deflexion from it call them lawful or unlawful, good or bad, say something more particular and precise. And indeed it is true, that whatever will bear to be tried by right reason, is right; and that which is condemned by it, wrong. And moreover, if by right reason is meant that which is found by the right use of our rational faculties, this is the same with truth: and what is said by them, will be comprehended in what I have said. But the manner in which they have delivered themselves, is not yet explicit enough. It leaves room for so many disputes and opposite right-reasons, that nothing can be settled, while every one pretends that his reason is right. And beside, what I have said, extends farther: for we are not only to respect those truths, which we discover by reasoning, but even such matters of fact, as are fairly discoverd to us by our senses. We ought to regard things as being what they are, which way soever we come to the knowledge of them.

1048 They, who contenting themselves with superficial and transient views, deduce the difference between good and evil from the common sense of mankind, and certain principles that are born with us, put the matter upon a very infirm foot. For it is much

to be suspected there are no such innate maxims as they pretend, but that the impressions of education are mistaken for them : and beside that, the sentiments of mankind are not so uniform and constant, as that we may safely trust such an important distinction upon them.

1049 They, who own nothing to be good but pleasure, or what they call *jucundum*, nothing evil but pain, and distinguish things by their tendencies to this or that, do not agree in what this pleasure is to be placed, or by what methods and actings the most of it may be obtaind. These are left to be questions still. As men have different tastes, different degrees of sense and philosophy, the same thing cannot be pleasant to all : and if particular actions are to be proved by this test, the morality of them will be very uncertain ; the same act may be of one nature to one man, and of another to another. Beside, unless there be some strong limitation added as a fence for virtue, men will be apt to sink into gross voluptuousness, as in fact the generality of Epicurus's herd have done (notwithstanding all his talk of temperance, virtue, tranquility of mind, &c.) ; and the bridle will be usurped by those appetites which it is a principal part of all religion, natural as well as any other, to curb and restrain. So these men say what is intelligible indeed : but what they say is false. For not all pleasures, but only such pleasure as is true, or happiness (of which afterwards), may be reckond among the *fines*, or *ultima bonorum*.

1050 He, who, having considered the two extremes in men's practice, in condemning both which the world generally agrees, places virtue in the middle, and seems to raise an idea of it from its situation at an equal distance from the opposite extremes, could only design to be understood of such virtues, as have extremes. It must be granted indeed, that whatever declines in any degree toward either extreme, must be so far wrong or evil ; and therefore that, which equally (or nearly) divides the distance, and declines neither way, must be right : also, that his notion supplies us with a good direction for common use in many cases. But then there are several obligations, that can by no means be derived from it: scarce more than such, as respect the virtues couched under the word moderation. And even as to these, it is many times difficult to discern, which is the middle point. This the author himself was sensible of.

1051 And when his master Plato makes virtue to consist in such

a likeness to God, as we are capable of (and God to be the great exemplar), he says what I shall not dispute. But since he tells us not how or by what means we may attain this likeness, we are little the wiser in point of practice: unless by it we understand the practice of truth, God being truth, and doing nothing contrary to it.

1052 Whether any of those other foundations, upon which morality has been built, will hold better than these mentiond, I much question. But if the formal ratio of moral good and evil be made to consist in a conformity of men's acts to the truth of the case or the contrary, as I have here explainid it, the distinction seems to be settled in a manner undenieble, intelligible, practicable. For as what is meant by a true proposition and matter of fact is perfectly understood by every body; so will it be easy for any one, so far as he knows any such propositions and facts, to compare not only words, but also actions with them. A very little skill and attention will serve to interpret even these, and discover whether they speak truth, or not.

1053 X. If there be moral good and evil, distinguishd as before, there is religion; and such as may most properly be styled natural. By religion I mean nothing else but an obligation to do (under which word I comprehend acts both of body and mind. I say, to do) what ought not to be omitted, and to forbear what ought not to be done. So that there must be religion, if there are things, of which some ought not to be done, some not to be omitted. But that there are such, appears from what has been said concerning moral good and evil: because that, which to omit would be evil, and which therefore being done would be good or well done, ought certainly by the terms to be done; and so that, which being done would be evil, and implies such absurdities and rebellion against the supreme being, as are mentiond under proposition the IVth, ought most undoubtedly not to be done. And then since there is religion, which follows from the distinction between moral good and evil; since this distinction is founded in the respect, which men's acts bear to truth; and since no proposition can be true, which expresses things otherwise than as they are in nature: since things are so, there must be religion, which is founded in nature, and may upon that account be most properly and truly called the religion of nature or natural religion; the great law of which religion, the law of

nature, or rather (as we shall afterwards find reason to call it) of the Author of nature is,

- 1054** XI. That every intelligent, active, and free being should so behave himself, as by no act to contradict truth ; or, that he should treat every thing as being what it is.

Objections I am sensible may be made to almost any thing ; but I believe none to what has been here advanced but such as may be answerd. For to consider a thing as being something else than what it is, or (which is the same) not to consider it as being what it is, is an absurdity indefensible. However, for a specimen, I will set down a few. Let us suppose some gentleman, who has not sufficiently considered these matters, amidst his freedoms, and in the gaiety of humor, to talk after some such manner as this. ‘If every thing must be treated as being what it is, what rare work will follow ? For, 1. to treat my enemy as such is to kill him, or revenge myself soundly upon him. 2. To use a creditor, who is a spendthrift, or one that knows not the use of money, or has no occasion for it, as such, is not to pay him. Nay further, 3. If I want money, don’t I act according to truth, if I take it from some body else to supply my own wants ? And more, do not I act contrary to truth, if I do not ? 4. If one, who plainly appears to have a design of killing another, or doing him some great mischief, if he can find him, should ask me where he is, and I know where he is ; may not I, to save life, say I do not know, tho that be false ? 5. At this rate I may not, in a frolick, break a glass, or burn a book : because forsooth to use these things as being what they are, is to drink out of the one, not to break it ; and to read the other, not burn it. Lastly, how shall a man know what is true : and if he can find out truth, may he not want the power of acting agreeably to it ?’

- 1055** To the first objection it is easy to reply from what has been already said. For if the objector’s enemy, whom we will call E, was nothing more than his enemy, there might be some force in the objection ; but since he may be considerd as something else beside that, he must be used according to what he is in other respects, as well as in that from which he is denominated the objector’s (or O’s) enemy. For E in the first place is a man ; and as such may claim the benefit of common humanity, whatever that is : and if O denies it to him, he wounds truth in a very sensible part. And then if O and E are fellow-citizens, living under the

same government, and subject to laws, which are so many common covenants, limiting the behaviour of one man to another, and by which O is exempt from all private violence in his body, estate, &c., O cannot treat E as being what he is, unless he treats him also as one, who by common consent is under such a protection. If he does otherwise, he denies the existence of the foresaid laws and public compacts: contrary to truth. And beside, O should act with respect to himself as being what he is; a man himself, in such or such circumstances, and one who has given up all right to private revenge (for that is the thing meant here). If truth therefore be observed, the result will be this. O must treat E as something compounded of a man, a fellow-citizen, and an enemy, all three: that is, he must only prosecute him in such a way, as is agreeable to the statutes and methods, which the society have obliged themselves to observe. And even as to legal prosecutions, there may be many things still to be considered. For E may shew himself an enemy to O in things, that fall under the cognizance of law, which yet may be of moment and importance to him, or not. If they are such things, as really affect the safety or happiness of O or his family, then he will find himself obliged, in duty and submission to truth, to take refuge in the laws; and to punish E, or obtain satisfaction, and at least security for the future, by the means there prescribed. Because if he does not, he denies the nature and sense of happiness to be what they are; the obligations, which perhaps we shall shew hereafter he is under to his family, to be what they are; a dangerous and wicked enemy to be dangerous and wicked; the end of laws, and society itself, to be the safety and good of its members, by preventing injuries, punishing offenders, &c. which it will appear to be, when that matter comes before us. But if the enmity of E rises not beyond trifling, or more tolerable instances, then O might act against truth, if he should be at more charge or hazard in prosecuting E than he can afford, or the thing lost or in danger is worth; should treat one that is an enemy in little things, or a little enemy, as a great one; or should deny to make some allowances, and forgive such peccadillo's, as the common frailty of human nature makes it necessary for us mutually to forgive, if we will live together. Lastly, in cases, of which the laws of the place take no notice, truth and nature would be sufficiently observed, if O should keep a vigilant eye upon the steps

of his adversary, and take the most prudent measures, that are compatible with the character of a private person, either to asswage the malice of E, or prevent the effects of it; or perhaps, if he should only not use him as a friend. For this if he should do, notwithstanding the rants of some men, he would cancel the natural differences of things, and confound truth with untruth.

1056 The debtor in the second objection, if he acts as he says there, does, in the first place, make himself the judge of his creditor, which is what he is not. For he lays him under a heavy sentence, an incapacity in effect of having any estate, or any more estate. In the next place, he arrogates to himself more than can be true: that he perfectly knows, not only what his creditor and his circumstances are, but also what they ever will be hereafter. He that is now weak, or extravagant, or very rich, may for ought he knows become otherwise. And, which is to be considered above all, he directly denies the money, which is the creditor's, to be the creditor's. For it is supposed to be owing or due to him (otherwise he is no creditor): and if it be due to him, he has a right to it: and if he has a right to it, of right it is his (or, it is his). But the debtor by detaining it uses it, as if it was his own, and therefore not the other's; contrary to truth. To pay a man what is due to him doth not deny, that he who pays may think him extravagant, &c. or any other truth; that act has no such signification. It only signifies, that he who pays thinks it due to the other, or that it is his: and this it naturally doth signify. For he might pay the creditor without having any other thought relating to him, but would not without this.

1057 Ans. to objection the 3d. Acting according to truth, as that phrase is used in the objection, is not the thing required by my rule; but, so to act that no truth may be denied by any act. Not taking from another man his money by violence is a forbearance, which does not signify, that I do not want money, or which denies any truth. But taking it denies that to be his, which (by the supposition) is his. The former is only as it were silence, which denies nothing: the latter a direct and loud assertion of a falsity; the former what can contradict no truth, because the latter does. If a man wants money through his own extravagance and vice, there can be no pretence for making another man to pay for his wickedness or folly. We will suppose therefore the man, who wants money, to want it for necessities, and to have incurred

this want through some misfortune, which he could not prevent. In this case, which is put as strong as can be for the objector, there are ways of expressing this want, or acting according to it, without trespassing upon truth. The man may by honest labor and industry seek to supply his wants ; or he may apply as a suppliant, not as an enemy or robber, to such as can afford to relieve him ; or if his want is very pressing, to the first persons he meets, whom truth will oblige to assist him according to their abilities : or he may do any thing but violate truth ; which is a privilege of a vast scope, and leaves him many resources. And such a behaviour as this is not only agreeable to his case, and expressive of it in a way that is natural ; but he would deny it to be what it is, if he did not act thus. If there is no way in the world, by which he may help himself without the violation of truth (which can scarce be supposed. If there is no other way) he must e'en take it as his fate. Truth will be truth, and must retain its character and force, let his case be what it will. Many things might be added. The man, from whom this money is to be taken, will be proved sect. vi. to have a right to defend himself and his, and not suffer it to be taken from him ; perhaps he may stand as much in need of it, as the other, &c.

- 1058 Ans. to obj. the 4th. It is certain, in the first place, that nothing may willingly be done, which in any manner promotes murder : whoever is accessory to that, offends against many truths of great weight. 2. You are not obliged to answer the furioso's question. Silence here would contradict no truth. 3. No one can tell, in strict speaking, where another is, if he is not within his view. Therefore you may truly deny, that you know where the man is. Lastly, if by not discovering him you should indanger your life (and this is the hardest circumstance, that can be taken into the objection), the case then would be the same, as if the inquirer should say, 'If you do not murder such a one, I will murder you.' And then be sure you must not commit murder ; but must defend yourself against this, as against other dangers, against Banditti, &c. as well as you can. Tho merely to deny truth by words (I mean, when they are not productive of facts to follow ; as in judicial transactions, bearing witness, or passing sentence) is not equal to a denial by facts ; tho an abuse of language is allowable in this case, if ever in any ; tho all sins against truth are not equal, and certainly a little

trespassing upon it in the present case, for the good of all parties, as little a one as any ; and tho one might look on a man in such a fit of rage as mad, and therefore talk to him not as a man but a mad man : yet truth is sacred, and there are other ways of coming off with innocence, by giving timely notice to the man in danger, calling in assistance, or taking the advantage of some seasonable incident.

1059 The 5th objection seems to respect inanimate things, which if we must treat according to what they are, it is insinuated we shall become obnoxious to many trifling obligations ; such as are there mentioned. To this I answer thus. If the glass be nothing else but an useful drinking-glass, and these words fully express what it is, to treat it accordingly is indeed to drink out of it, when there is occasion and it is truly useful, and to break it designedly is to do what is wrong. For that is to handle it, as if it neither was useful to the objector himself, nor could be so to any one else ; contrary to the description of it. But if there be any reason for breaking the glass, then something is wanting to declare fully what it is. As, if the glass be poisoнд : for then it becomes a poison'd drinking-glass, and to break or destroy it is to use it according to this true description of it. Or if by breaking it any thing is to be obtained, which more than countervails the loss of it, it becomes a glass with that circumstance : and then for the objector to break it, if it be his own, is to use it according to what it is. And if it should become by some circumstance useless only, tho there should be no reason for breaking it, yet if there be none against it, the thing will be indifferent and matter of liberty. This answer, *mutatis mutandis*, may be adapted to other things of this kind ; books, or any thing else. As the usefulness or excellence of some books renders them worthy of immortality, and of all our care to secure them to posterity ; so some may be used more like what they are, by tearing or burning them, than by preserving or reading them : the number of which, large enough already, I wish you may not think to be increased by this, which I here send you.

1060 Here two things ought to be regarded. 1. That tho to act against truth in any case is wrong, yet, the degrees of guilt varying with the importance of things, in some cases the importance one way or t'other may be so little as to render the crime evanescent or almost nothing. And, 2. that inanimate beings cannot be

considered as capable of wrong treatment, if the respect they bear to living beings is separated from them. The drinking-glass before mentiond could not be considerd as such, or be what it now is, if there was no drinking animal to own and use it. Nothing can be of any importance to that thing itself, which is void of all life and perception. So that when we compute what such things are, we must take them as being what they are in reference to things that have life.

The last and most material objection, or question rather, shall be answerd by and by. In the mean time I shall only say, that if in any particular case truth is inaccessible, and after due inquiry it doth not appear what, or how things are, then this will be true, that the case or thing under consideration is doubtful : and to act agreeably unto this truth is to be not opinionative, nor obstinate, but modest, cautious, docile, and to endeavour to be on the safer side. Such behaviour shews the case to be as it is. And as to the want of power to act agreeably to truth, that cannot be known till trials are made : and if any one doth try, and do his endeavor, he may take to himself the satisfaction, which he will find in sect. IV.

SECTION II. OF HAPPINESS.

1061 THAT, which demands to be next considerd, is happiness ; as being in itself most considerable ; as abetting the cause of truth : and as being indeed so nearly allied to it, that they cannot well be parted. We cannot pay the respects due to one, unless we regard the other. Happiness must not be denied to be what it is : and it is by the practice of truth that we aim at that happiness, which is true.

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1062 II. Pain considered in itself is a real evil, pleasure a real good. I take this as a postulatum, that will without difficulty be granted. Therefor,

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1063 V. When pleasures and pains are equal, they mutually destroy each other : when the one exceeds, the excess gives the true quantity of pleasure or pain. For nine degrees of pleasure, less by nine degrees of pain, are equal to nothing : but nine degrees

of one, less by three degrees of the other, give six of the former net and true.

1064 VI. As therefore there may be true pleasure and pain: so there may be some pleasures, which compared with what attends or follows them, not only may vanish into nothing, but may even degenerate into pain, and ought to be reckond as pains¹; and v. v. some pains, that may be annumerated to pleasures. For the true quantity of pleasure differs not from that quantity of true pleasure; or it is so much of that kind of pleasure, which is true (clear of all discounts and future payments): nor can the true quantity of pain not be the same with that quantity of truth or mere pain.

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1065 VIII. That being may be said to be ultimately happy, in some degree or other, the sum total of whose pleasures exceeds the sum of all his pains: or, ultimate happiness is the sum of happiness, or true pleasure, at the foot of the account. And so on the other side, that being may be said to be ultimately unhappy, the sum of all whose pains exceeds that of all his pleasures.

1066 IX. To make itself happy is a duty, which every being, in proportion to its capacity, owes to itself; and that, which every intelligent being may be supposed to aim at, in general. For happiness is some quantity of true pleasure: and that pleasure, which I call true, may be considerd by itself, and so will be justly desirable (according to prop. II, and III). On the contrary, unhappiness is certainly to be avoided: because being a quantity of mere pain, it may be considerd by itself, as a real, mere evil, &c. and because if I am obliged to pursue happiness, I am at the same time obliged to recede, as far as I can, from its contrary. All this is self-evident. And hence it follows, that,

1067 X. We cannot act with respect to either ourselves, or other men, as being what we and they are, unless both are considerd as beings susceptive of happiness and unhappiness, and naturally desirous of the one and averse to the other. Other animals may be considerd after the same manner in proportion to their several degrees of apprehension.

But that the nature of happiness, and the road to it, which is

¹ ‘Nocet (fit noxa) empta dolore voluptas.’ ‘Pleasure, that is procured by pain, is so much real hurt.’ Hor. And, ‘multo corrupta dolore voluptas.’ ‘Pleasure vitiated by much pain.’ Ibid.

so very apt to be mistaken, may be better understood; and true pleasures more certainly distinguishd from false; the following propositions must still be added.

1068 XI. As the true and ultimate happiness of no being can be produced by any thing, that interferes with truth, and denies the natures of things: so neither can the practice of truth make any being ultimately unhappy. For that, which contradicts nature and truth, opposes the will of the Author of nature, and to suppose, that an inferior being may in opposition to His will break through the constitution of things, and by so doing make himself happy, is to suppose that being more potent than the Author of nature, and consequently more potent than the author of the nature and power of that very being himself, which is absurd. And as to the other part of the proposition, it is also absurd to think, that, by the constitution of nature and will of its author, any being should be finally miserable only for conforming himself to truth, and owning things and the relations lying between them to be what they are. It is much the same as to say, God has made it natural to contradict nature; or unnatural, and therefore punishable, to act according to nature and reality. If such a blunder (excuse the boldness of the word) could be, it must come either thro a defect of power in Him to cause a better and more equitable scheme, or from some delight, which he finds in the misery of his dependents. The former cannot be ascribed to the First cause, who is the fountain of power: nor the latter to Him, who gives so many proofs of his goodness and beneficence. Many beings may be said to be happy; and there are none of us all, who have not many injoyments: whereas did he delight in the infelicity of those beings, which depend upon Him, it must be natural to Him to make them unhappy, and then not one of them would be otherwise in any respect. The world in that case instead of being such a beautiful, admirable system, in which there is only a mixture of evils, could have been only a scene of mere misery, horror, and torment.

That either the enemies of truth (wicked men) should be ultimately happy, or the religious observers of it (good men) ultimately unhappy, is such injustice, and an evil so great, that sure no Manichean will allow such a superiority of his evil principle over the good, as is requisite to produce and maintain it.

1069 XII. The genuine happiness of every being must be something,

that is not incompatible with or destructive of its nature, or the superior or better part of it, if it be mixt. For instance, nothing can be the true happiness of a rational being, that is inconsistent with reason. For all pleasure, and therefore be sure all clear pleasure and true happiness must be something agreeable (pr. I.) : and nothing can be agreeable to a reasoning nature, or (which is the same) to the reason of that nature, which is repugnant and disagreeable to reason. If any thing becomes agreeable to a rational being, which is not agreeable to reason, it is plain his reason is lost, his nature deprest, and that he now lifts himself among irrationals, at least as to that particular. If a being finds pleasure in any thing unreasonable, he has an unreasonable pleasure ; but a rational nature can like nothing of that kind without a contradiction to itself. For to do this would be to act, as if it was the contrary to what it is. Lastly, if we find hereafter, that whatever interferes with reason, interferes with truth, and to contradict either of them is the same thing ; then what has been said under the former proposition, does also confirm this : as what has been said in proof of this, does also confirm the former.

1070 XIII. Those pleasures are true, and to be reckond into our happiness, against which there lies no reason. For when there is no reason against any pleasure, there is always one for it, included in the term. So when there is no reason for undergoing pain (or venturing it), there is one against it.

Obs. There is therefore no necessity for men to torture their inventions in finding out arguments to justify themselves in the pursuits after worldly advantages and injoymens, provided that neither these injoymens, nor the means by which they are attaint, contain the violation of any truth, by being unjust, immoderate, or the like. For in this case there is no reason why we should not desire them, and a direct one, why we should ; viz. because they are injoymens.

1071 XIV. To conclude this section, The way to happiness and the practice of truth incur the one into the other. For no being can be styled happy, that is not ultimately so : because if all his pains exceed all his pleasures, he is so far from being happy, that he is a being unhappy or miserable, in proportion to that excess. Now by prop. XI. nothing can produce the ultimate happiness of any being, which interferes with truth : and therefore whatever doth

produce that, must be something which is consistent and coincident with this.

Two things then (but such as are met together, and embrace each other), which are to be religiously regarded in all our conduct, are truth (of which in the preceding sect.) and happiness (that is, such pleasures, as company, or follow the practice of truth, or are not inconsistent with it: of which I have been treating in this). And as that religion, which arises from the distinction between moral good and evil, was called natural, because grounded upon truth and the natures of things: so perhaps may that too, which proposes happiness for its end, in as much as it proceeds upon that difference, which there is between true pleasure and pain, which are physical (or natural) good and evil. And since both these unite so amicably, and are at last the same, here is one religion which may be called natural upon two accounts.

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